

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 1/4/2024 2:08:46 AM

First name: Andrew

Last name: Menotti

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear USFS,

I write to express my concerns regarding FSM 2355 Climbing Opportunities #ORMS-3524. I think the idea of banning placement of fixed anchors, which would primarily be bolts, is a bad idea. Here are my thoughts:

1. Rock climbing has been an activity that has been going on at National Parks/USFS since the 40s or 50s. Since the advent of climbing in those days, climbing has become cleaner and cleaner in terms of its impact on the rock. The days of hammering pitons into cracks are mostly gone; I have never met a person who even owned a piton of any kind. Changing this policy will reverse a policy that has gone on for 70 or so years.

2. Many climbs will simply be un-climbable. Climbing Snake Dike on Half Dome in Yosemite will simply become impossible without bolts. In fact, I would argue we should place additional bolts on Snake Dike, as the climb itself does not protect well but for the bolts. Obviously, if one's true goal is simply to ban climbing in many parts of the USFS/NPS, this would be an effective way to do that without saying you are doing just that. But It would be a truly sad thing for climbers to lose such wonderful adventures.

3. However, if the NPS and USFS wishes to preserve climbing and the aesthetic beauty of the natural surroundings in the national parks, then mandating that rock colored bolts be used might be a better solution. While I do not believe it is possible to see a bolt from more than 100 feet or so, I could at least be sympathetic to the idea that they impact the vistas in a given area of a national park. I think rock colored bolts allows for a compromise (at least for the first 100 feet of climbing or something like that)

4. I don't think this is a manageable plan. New bolting already requires a permit, at least in places like Joshua Tree. But the fact is, in places like Joshua Tree, banning bolts will be hard to enforce. I cannot say I have ever seen a ranger in any climbing area of Joshua Tree or Yosemite. I think this might lead to a waste of precious resources trying to enforce a bolting ban.

5. Despite the ban, people will climb and simply climb in a less safe manner. There's just no substitute for a bolted anchor in terms of safety. It is just the safest protection from falling. Traditional gear such as cams, nuts, hexes etc are great and have their place, but in my personal experience, nothing is safer than an anchor made up of two bolts placed in a discrete placed that is not visible to people on the ground. Anchors made out of three pieces of multidirectional gear are good, but People in Joshua Tree might not bring the additional rope sometimes needed to set up a good redundant system. Bolting will save limbs and lives.

Climbers are fierce defenders of natural resources. I leave no trace and try to always take an additional piece of trash with me out of any wild area I enter. Our experience in the outdoors and skills we possess can be useful to ordinary NPS/USFS visitors. I have personally advised a person in the Cholla Cactus Garden in Joshua Tree on how to remove a cholla after he walked off trail. I advised him to keep on the trail to avoid that problem in the future. While a relatively small act, I was a NPS ranger in that moment, helping protect the park and helping people enjoy the park safely. Please, let us work together to protect our natural resources.