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Comments: Greetings,

As a rock climber and someone who has been traveling in designated "wilderness" areas as diverse as Colorado's rockies, Californias's Sierra, North Carolina's High Country, and the desert Southwest's canyons I love wilderness and want to see it protected. However, I disagree with the concept that bolts are necessarily an "installation" that needs to be removed. The prohibition of bolts in wilderness climbing areas would essentially be eliminating the possibility to safely climb in those areas. I suspect that is precisely what some parties against bolts want.

This would go against decades of precedent. David Brower, a staunch wilderness advocate, and founder of the Sierra Club was an avid rock climber! Bolts have been used in wilderness since the dawn of rock climbing. For the most part you can't even see the bolts unless you are really looking for them. And even then you might miss them. To compare rock climbing to even something as basic as a trail system is unfair. The impacts are MUCH less.

This proposal is in bad faith and has no interest in meeting climbers halfway. I would agree that super popular wilderness climbing areas like El Captain and Rocky Mtn NP need to be regulated. But regulation does not mean prohibition. This proposal would erase the possibility of safely climbing at countless climbing areas. Climbers would certainly die as a result of this policy. This is not simply not acceptable. Climbers as a user group have historically had a strong track record of banding together to protect the areas we use. This happens in the form of clean ups on El Cap, trail work to prevent further erosion at popular areas, and spreading conservation education to new users. I don't see that changing. I only see that improving. That means having climbers as ally's for wilderness instead of considering us as vandals as the authors of this policy would suggest.

In 2001 I worked as a volunteer ranger at Arches National Park. I did bird surveys, led trail walks in the Fiery Furnace, gave campfire talks, answered questions of all kinds about Arches. I did my best to preserve the Parks natural beauty and resources. I also climbed the towers of the park on my off days. My impact as a climber paled in comparison to the impact of the day to day tourists that flooded the park. Even with the increased numbers of climbers our impact is manageable. Climbing can coexist with Wilderness. I hope the USFS will recognize the rich history of climbing in wilderness and work with us to minimize impact, preserve resources, while allowing climbing to be a safe activity.

Sincerely,

Bradley Carter