

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 1/5/2024 6:51:17 PM

First name: Emily

Last name: Cowles

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Climbing anchors in wilderness areas have been authorized and managed for years. This has allowed people to be able to explore the outdoors in different ways that would otherwise be impossible. Fixed anchors are not considered a prohibited installation under the Wilderness Act. Following the existing climbing policies, that has allowed judicious use of fixed anchors for more than a half century, is enough to continue to protect wilderness character, like it has for decades. Fixed bolts are an essential part of climbers' safety systems. Without the ability to replace old bolts, climbers will be put into dangerous situations unnecessarily. The climbing community already takes responsibility for replacing old bolts and climbers know how to check if a bolt needs replacing and what local climbing organizations to reach out to in order to make that happen. Imposing unnecessary obstacles to bolt replacement will put many climbers in danger. Many historical routes that have been climbed for decades (some of which represent some of the best athletic feats and examples of humans pushing themselves to the limit that this country has ever seen) will be lost. I love to enjoy the outdoors in many ways - backpacking, hiking, kayaking. But climbing is the only way to enjoy the outdoors in such a unique way. Often away from the crowds, climbing provides a mental and physical challenge that has been enjoyed in wilderness areas for decades. In more recent years, the climbing community has become an ambassador for conservation efforts and are willing to work together with agencies like the National Park Service to abide by seasonal closures for the benefit of wildlife and other environmental issues. There are already many areas of our climbing being taken away by mining companies and private land purchases. Climbers deserve to be able to continue to enjoy the outdoors in our public wilderness spaces in a safe way. Just like banning hiking would be unreasonable, so is the ban on bolt replacements, as it will effectively eliminate an entire group of people from being able to enjoy the outdoors in the way that they love in a space that is set aside for all to enjoy.