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Comments: To all of us it is a concern,

I grew up climbing around the White Sulphur Springs Montana area on both Forest Service and private property in the mid 1970's. There were no other climbers in the immediate area and still few. We had to go to the Gallatin Canyon near Bozeman to find routes in those days. Soon I found myself, family and fellow friends doing our own routes, not just a few but hundreds over the past five decades. I live for it and spent two and an half decades guiding climbing and sharing the experience thru my guiding business which was called Reach Your Peak. I am also the author of several climbing guide books. The Big Empty covering some 600 climbs of the Big and Little Belt Mountains along with the Castle Mountains and Indian Creek Canyon. Big Sky Ice is Montana's ice climbing guide along with northern Wyoming. The Select Alpine Climbs to Montana is a mountaineering guide to the state. Most of these early routes we did as teenagers were on granite and could be protected well with gear with an occasional bolt where there were no cracks for protection (hand drilled). In the mid 1980's we started exploring the vast expanses of limestone canyons and towers that the Little Belt, Big Belt and Castle Mountains are composed of. And I am still exploring them and doing a lot of new routes. Limestone can sometimes be protected with trad gear where there is cracks and good rock but, generally they need to be protected by bolts or a combination. Bolts are only used if there is no other protection to reasonably protect the climb. A lot of consideration goes into putting up a route. I go to great lengths to camouflage bolt hangers and make these routes nearly invisible. In most cases the outdoor motor enthusiasts of the Little, Big Belts and Castles don't even notice the routes are there as they leave the dust and/or ruts not to mention exhaust trails and then the "noise". I sincerely hope that the Forest Service will consider the placement of bolts and anchors on a district to district basis! In general, we have only just started exploring this vast limestone areas. Yes, there must be places that it is time to move on to new areas to avoid over doing a climbing area, taking away from the pristine landscape which is the reason we are out there climbing in the first place. Climbers here in Montana have been darned good at policing themselves to avoid run ins with authorities. Now while I have probably placed more bolts in Montana than any other climber, I promise you every single one of them is for a purpose and not next to a crack that could have taken a nut or camming unit. I'm hard core about not using bolts when they are not needed! Also, if a route requires excessive cleaning it is going to be noticed so those are avoided. I do not believe in placing a bolt in the Wilderness. Never have! I feel pitons which are removeable are as far as we go. If you can't do it without a bolt then it going to be runout. How resolved are we in doing it now? It's a different game in the Wilderness that I greatly respect. By the same token I respect the rock on Forest Service Lands and its natural state. Writing this letter does not seem like enough in a since of protecting it from being ruined by other less considerate users of the Forest Service Lands and Wilderness. I would be glad to share some of these wild canyons with Forest Service officials so they can just see them for their selves and how much trouble climbers go to avoid them being a visual impact. I hope I get to continue putting up routes here in Montana well into my days.

Ron Brunckhorst