

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 1/11/2024 3:43:03 PM

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Comments: With more and more people (climbers and non-climbers) venturing into Wilderness areas there is certainly a need to study and address the impact of human travel in these pristine areas. However, an outright ban of fixed anchors is not the solution. Climbing has a rich history in the United States and it provides a powerful sense of respect and a desire to protect these beautiful natural places. If we ban fixed anchors we will not only lose a rich part of our history, we will lose the chance to gain more stewards of these lands. While I acknowledge that more people going into wilderness areas means more of an impact on the local ecosystem, I firmly believe that the more people there are who experience a true sense of awe from nature, the more people there will be who care about and want to protect these areas. Climbing, perhaps as much as any other form of interaction with mountains, provides that deep sense of awe.

So why not just climb mountains that don't require fixed anchors? For one, many routes have already been established using fixed anchors (under the initial guidance and understanding of the Wilderness Act) and these anchors are generally necessary for safe travel or retreat. These routes are often significant in the history of climbing and without the existence and maintenance of these fixed anchors they would no longer be climbed, and the ability to step into the shoes of past generations, to appreciate what they accomplished and experienced, would be lost. Secondly, many routes "can" be climbed without fixed anchors, however, this often leads to a very low margin of safety and greatly complicates rescues and retreats which, without fixed anchors, can result in much higher amounts of manmade gear being left behind.

As for the argument that fixed anchors detract from the natural beauty of a landscape and disturb its natural state, I believe that anyone who knows anything about climbing and fixed anchors knows that they are essentially invisible and do not pose any problems to wildlife. In wilderness areas the climbing community has done a great job of setting high standards for climbers who need to install fixed hardware. The general ethic is to install the bare minimum hardware to make a route safe, and this is done primarily only on routes that are truly captivating. Routes that others can be inspired by and that renew that sense of awe for these magical places.

My sincere hope is that this committee understands that these comments come from a true lover and protector of wild places, and that it sees the need for continued protection of fixed anchors in Wilderness areas.