

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 1/12/2024 3:49:38 AM

First name: Melanie

Last name: Stam

Organization:

Title:

Comments: I am a canyoner, climber, caver, hiker, and skier located in Washington state, and am writing to express my vehement opposition to the proposal as written, which would cause irreparable damage to my most precious ways of experiencing and exploring the outdoors. Canyoning and climbing have allowed me to access wilderness and appreciate nature in a way that would be otherwise impossible. It is difficult to describe the awe of being deep in a slot canyon, feeling the forces of nature actively shaping the landscape, in a place where very few humans have ever been and which would be inaccessible if it were not for bolts. Similarly many of the climbing crown jewels of the state, places so exposed and majestic they take your breath away, would be effectively closed to the public forever without judicious bolt placement to allow for safe ascents and descents. While most canyons in the Pacific Northwest have natural anchors for some drops, the majority have at least one drop which would be impossible to descend safely without bolting, and because most canyons are impossible to exit partway through the entire canyon would effectively be un-descendable. Even drops with alternative (unbolted) anchors can result in increased impact to the environment, requiring canyoners to pass over vegetation, resulting in erosion and potential damage to trees. The factors are very similar in a climbing context, where there do not always exist safe alternatives (such as trees or boulders) to bolted anchors, or where impacts to non-bolt anchors can be unsustainable. In some cases bolting allows rappellers not to overlap with the ascent route, reducing the possibility of congestion and the risks of rockfall to other parties.

This proposal represents an existential crisis to the communities I love most, whose fierce advocacy for the wild could be jeopardized, and to these communities' access to the places we love most. I am not a religious person, but these places are my church. They are where I go to feel the largeness of the world and the smallness of my place in it, to feel that there is a before and after me, to know great beauty and find purpose. These are places which hold deep meaning to me, which I have had the privilege of sharing with others who I love, and losing them would relegate my experience of the world to a greyer, less rich one.