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Comments: As a climber of over 10 years, I feel compelled to address the proposal to outlaw bolting in Wilderness Areas. While I deeply respect the need for thoughtful management and regulation, I believe that an outright ban on fixed protection is misguided and could have detrimental consequences for climbers, the environment, and safety.

****The Flaws of Outlawing Bolting****

1. ****Safety Concerns****: Climbing anchors play a critical role in ensuring climbers' safety. Restricting climbers' ability to place bolts or other fixed protection jeopardizes their ability to protect themselves adequately. When natural protection (such as cracks or features) is insufficient, climbers rely on bolts to prevent falls. Outlawing bolting could lead to accidents and injuries.

2. ****Environmental Impact****: Climbers are passionate about preserving the pristine beauty of our natural landscapes. However, without proper fixed protection, climbers may resort to improvised solutions or unlawful bolting. Hastily placed, chopped, replaced bolts will cause more damage than thoughtful bolting. Bolts, when placed thoughtfully, minimize this impact by concentrating wear on specific routes.

3. ****Crowding and Concentration****: Designating only specific "safe" routes for climbers could create overcrowding. Climbers would flock to these routes, leading to increased traffic, erosion, and environmental degradation. Moreover, concentrating climbers on a few routes could exacerbate safety concerns, as crowded routes become more dangerous due to rockfall and congestion.

****A Collaborative Approach****

Rather than an outright ban, I propose a harm-reduction approach that balances safety, accessibility, and environmental stewardship:

1. ****Collaborative Route Equipping****:

- Engage climbers in the process of equipping popular routes. Establish guidelines for bolting that balance safety and environmental impact.
- Encourage climbers to report outdated or unsafe fixed protection. Collaborate with local climbing communities to replace old bolts and maintain safety.

2. ****Balancing Tradition and Innovation****:

- Recognize that climbing is an integral part of our wilderness heritage. It embodies exploration, adventure, and self-reliance.
- Encourage innovation in bolt technology and materials to minimize environmental impact.

****Conclusion****

Climbers are not adversaries; we are stewards of the land. Let us work together to create a sustainable approach that respects both our passion for climbing and the fragile ecosystems we cherish. Outlawing bolting is a blunt instrument; collaboration is the key to preserving our wild places for generations to come.