

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 1/20/2024 5:41:47 PM

First name: Catherine

Last name: Coe

Organization:

Title:

Comments: First of all, thank you USFS for all you do to maintain and protect wilderness and recreation areas. My life would be very different without public access to forest land. As a climber for over 20 years, I have enjoyed access - whether it be for backpacking, rock climbing, or skiing - to a variety of USFS areas.

I am confused about why this issue with fixed anchors is coming up now. Has there been an increased impact from fixed anchors in wilderness areas in recent years? From my experience, most wilderness area climbing routes require a significant effort to get to. Therefore they often do not see the amount of traffic that high volume hiking areas see. If we are concerned about impact from humans, wouldn't it make more sense to look at high volume foot traffic where off trail travel has become a problem and erosion is a very real issue, or at the impact of horse packing or large commercial hiking groups - both incredibly high impact activities that I see the value in, but I recognize that they often leave a noticeable trace everywhere they occur? Why is the placement of one small piece of mineral substance into another piece of rock, which typically goes unnoticed to anyone not looking for them, potentially going to take the focus and energy of so many resources in the near future? Can we really justify mobilizing resources to remove these small, hardly noticeable and even less environmentally impactful objects?

I would love to instead see the mobilization of resources for the placement of [more] bear boxes (and enforcement to use them) in popular camping areas in the Wind River Range (Deep Lake, the Cirque, Cathedral Cirque, etc). Poor food storage practices in these places have led to dangerous encounters and habituated black bears, as well as the spreading of food and trash throughout those areas. How can we be worried about a sling around a horn 1000 feet up a wall, or some bolts that allow safe descents from some of the world's most high quality climbing routes, when bear + human encounters are such an obvious larger problem (as well as human waste disposal in so many places...this is a much bigger problem than bolts).

Furthermore, the removal of fixed anchors is not practical. Even on routes with walk offs, inevitably people have to bail at times for a variety of reasons, be it time or weather or other factors. What then? Will they get fined if they leave webbing behind to get down safely, or would we prefer that they mobilize massive amounts of resources for a rescue?

With respect and gratitude for everything you do, I'm requesting that you please recognize that this proposal is impractical and would be an unfortunate waste of resources on a negligible trace in our wilderness areas, especially when compared to other, higher impact activities. In places like the Wind River Mountain Range, it would be impossible to remove and keep gone all the anchors that have been left behind by climbers problem solving to descend safely without rescue. It would be like asking people to stop taking tents into the wilderness due to the impact on the ground and the eyesore, and then expecting no one to be epic due to weather events.

Thank you for considering my comment, and please feel free to reach out with any questions.