

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 1/23/2024 10:20:13 PM

First name: Kathleen

Last name: Smith

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Fixed climbing anchors must not be allowed in Wilderness. Less than 3 percent of land in the Lower 48 is protected as Wilderness. In order to protect its wild character, The Wilderness Act prohibits installations and structures like permanent fixed climbing anchors.

Wilderness, by its very nature, is primitive and provides primitive recreation. Agencies have no duty to develop Wilderness to provide "opportunities for primitive recreation," like installing permanent anchors. Agencies need only protect Wilderness according to the provisions of the Wilderness Act to safeguard a primitive opportunity. Altering Wilderness for the purpose of recreation tramples, scars and degrades its primitive nature and creates something other than Wilderness.

Climbing without permanent anchors can be compatible with wilderness. Using removable protection like slings and chocks is also generally compatible. But permanent fixed climbing anchors, like bolts and pitons permanently pounded into Wilderness rock faces, diminish an area's wild character. Not only are such installations lasting signs of human development, but they also attract and concentrate use-at great expense to native plants and animals for whom Wilderness is often a last, safe refuge. Climbing in designated Wilderness will not come to an end without permanent fixed anchors-but defacing rock and adjacent areas will put an end to Wilderness.

Wilderness is an endangered landscape. Less than 3 percent of land in the Lower 48 is protected as Wilderness and it is threatened by escalating use.

Climbers needing the protection of fixed bolts or permanent anchors, can avoid Wilderness as there are ample permanently bolted climbs outside Wilderness. A natural limitation is not a bad thing when it comes to protecting Wilderness, particularly with the recent explosion of outdoor recreation in Wilderness.

Specific proposals for permanent fixed anchor installations in Wilderness must be subjected to public notice and an opportunity for public comment pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act.