

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 1/24/2024 2:10:37 AM

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Comments: Good day,

I am a climber from NY who very much looks forward to an annual one or two-week trip out west to climb in places like the Sierras and Bears Ears. I have heard that this issue regarding climbing anchors in wilderness areas has been brought to Congress by an organization called Wilderness Watch. Though climbers are a small group within the larger group of wilderness area users, I'm pretty sure that people holding views as extreme as those espoused by Wilderness Watch are much, much smaller. WW's contention that fixed anchors "permanently scar and degrade Wilderness" is simply not true. The vast majority of fixed anchors cannot be detected by non-climbers. If a non-climber were to stand below El Capitan in Yosemite and really look, really study the face, they would have a very hard time locating a single bolt, even though El Cap has many. Our best route developers take pains to situate anchors so as to maximize user safety while minimizing impact to the setting, often painting them to match the native rock color. Climbers as a group are generally very much on board with the low impact ethic. We love the unspoiled places we climb in and in the rare instance when popular crags attract enough climbers to create a problem (ie. soil erosion or vegetation trampling), climbers themselves are usually the first to organize a solution. Look at the way that the climbing community abides by raptor closures of cliffs . . . a pair of Peregrines can take a world class climbing area offline for months and rangers don't have to worry about shoos non-compliant climbers away.

If a mistake is made with anchor placement by someone developing a route, its in everyone's interest to fix the problem. This would be true for hikers who leave a candy wrapper on the trail or campers who set their tent on fragile grasses. The proposal to outlaw or radically encumber the use of fixed gear is like telling all hikers/campers they can't hike/camp anymore because of the wrapper/trampled grass. I like the language I have seen in USFS and NPS writings, "The proposed directive would ensure the Forest Service supports world-class climbing opportunities while also protecting natural and cultural resources for future generations" I agree and hope the good and trusting relationship these agencies have with the climbing community continues. I also hope that extremists don't hijack this issue and kneecap climbing in many of our nations most beautiful places.