

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 1/24/2024 3:25:56 PM

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Comments: Both the National Park Service (NPS) and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) have issued proposed policies governing rock climbing in the designated Wildernesses that I disagree with. The proposed policies are to elevate resort recreation above wilderness protection and permanently scar and degrade the wilderness through the installation of fixed climbing anchors.

Rock climbing without permanent fixed anchors is generally compatible with wilderness preservation. 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 natural character. Not only are such installations lasting signs of human development, but they also attract a concentrated useage at great expense to native plants and animals for whom the protected wilderness is often a last, safe refuge. And the parks rangers are not paid enough to begin with, this would require more work. There will be more rescues as those who are not qualified to climb will begin to because they don't have to be prepared nor skilled for such a feat.

Climbing in wilderness existed long before modern methods of placing fixed anchors became prevalent and increased the ability of climbers to climb thus far virtually impossible "routes." Along with the increased access provided by modern technology, use has significantly increased-so has damage to the rock and adjacent areas. Permanent fixed anchor use and maintenance in wilderness area has always been prohibited by the Wilderness Act's ban on installations.

Regrettably, the NPS and USFS have listened too closely to some climbers and lobbyists for the trillion dollar a year outdoor recreation industry, and not enough to wilderness advocates. Both agencies have proposed new policies that attempt to legalize the use of fixed anchors in Wilderness areas administered by the NPS and USFS. And with that much profit, the organizations should be paying rangers a heck of a bigger salary. Dealing with tourists and saving the protected ecosystem is no easy feat. The permanent fixtures will add more stress to their days

The Wilderness Act prohibits installations and structures like permanent fixed climbing anchors in order to protect the areas' wild character. Fixed climbing anchors must not be allowed in. The Wilderness Act's strict prohibitions, including its prohibition on installations, cannot be overcome by a desire to facilitate or enhance a particular form of recreation, and the narrow administrative exception for installations does not extend to the general public seeking to create developed recreational activities in Wilderness. The agencies' primary duty is to protect Wilderness in its natural, untrammled state.

Agencies have no duty to develop Wilderness to provide opportunities for recreation. The agencies need only to protect the Wilderness according to the provisions of the Wilderness Act to safeguard the opportunity for all to enjoy the great outdoors, left unspoiled by man.

Climbing without permanent fixed anchors is generally compatible with wilderness preservation. While it may be true that fewer people will climb certain routes in Wilderness if they don't have fixed bolts or other permanently-installed protection, natural limits on use is not a bad thing when it comes to wilderness protection, particularly with the recent explosion of outdoor recreation uses in Wilderness.

For those climbers seeking developed climbing opportunities, there are ample permanently bolted climbs outside of the wilderness preserves.

Wilderness is an endangered landscape. Less than 3 percent of land in the Lower 48 is protected as Wilderness, and it is under threat, including from rapidly escalating recreation pressures. Please keep these wild areas