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Organization:

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Comments: As a citizen, active climber, hiker, and former federal employee (both USFS and NPS), I urge you to reconsider limitations on climbing anchors.

The Wilderness Act specifies 4 parts to its definition of wilderness. I argue that anchors do not necessarily change the definition of wilderness and should be allowed. In addition I have concerns about funding of review processes. Lastly anchors are a critical safety issue. Without them there are likely to be more rescue operations, with helicopters, in the backcountry. A situation I believe everyone wants to help mitigate.

Anchors, specifically bolts are small and unless you are on route they are "substantially unnoticeable" (1). They are far more unnoticeable than a vault or composting toilet, a trail, a bridge, or other improvements that commonly are allowed in the wilderness. Without "permanent" (a misnomer since bolts do have a lifespan and must be replaced or removed) anchors climbers will be forced to leave behind much more coradage or webbing to safely descend off of climbs. The Wilderness Information Center in Marblemount of North Cascades NP has a display showing many pounds of material removed off one peak by rangers. Allowing anchors therefore will overall allow for a much less visible "imprint of man".

Anchors do not change the solitude or primitive, unconfined type nature of climbing in Wilderness area (2). However they greatly allow for risk reduction, further helping to preserve solitude and areas untrammelled by man.

There are mitigation options, such as painting anchors to further blend in to their natural environment that could be considered rather than restriction.

Like others I also have concerns about funding mechanisms to allow for review processes.

Climbing has a strong history in our wilderness areas and is iconic in some of them (ie Yosemite NP, North Cascades NP). With a long history of this type of use it seems that some parks were set aside with this use at least partly in mind. I would like to see that preserved. Based on the small impact anchors have on the environment, but the big impact they can have on visitors enjoyment and safety I urge you to reconsider the plans to regulate anchors.

Thank you,

Justin Colquhoun

- former Field Archeologist, Medicine Bow Route National Forest

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"(1) generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable; (2) has outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation..." - Definition of Wilderness; Wilderness Act