

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 1/28/2024 11:43:24 PM

First name: CLARKE

Last name: CONANT

Organization:

Title:

Comments: I am writing in opposition to the current proposal (FSM 2355 Climbing Opportunities #ORMS-3524) to prohibit fixed anchors in wilderness areas. My opposition is based on my well considered belief that this proposal will INCREASE, not decrease, the environmental impact of climbing in wilderness areas.

Many climbs require rappels for descent. These rappels require that a rappel "anchor" be left behind after the rappel is performed. In earlier years, climbers left loops of brightly colored nylon webbing behind that slowly accumulated as more rappels were performed, and slowly degraded due to winter and sun exposure. Rappel routes of the '70s and '80s were festooned with these conspicuous fixtures, which came to be known as "Tat".

Since the '90s, organizations like the American Safe Climbing Association have worked with wilderness land managers to install permanent anchors that are inconspicuous and resistant to degradation.

When properly installed in coordination with local land managers, these anchors allow the area of the climb to (to use the words of the Wilderness Act) "generally appear to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable."

Climbers won't stop climbing because of prohibitions on fixed anchors. Instead, they will go back to the old, high-impact, unsafe way of doing things. For this reason the Park Service needs to revise the proposal to allow a lower impact, safer way of getting off climbs that is consistent with local practices.