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Comments: I am a 73 year old ex-climber who passionately and extensively climbed in the USA and further afield for some 40 years. For almost as long, I have been even more passionate about wilderness areas. Trad climbing is an important recreation in wilderness areas, with a long history prior to wilderness designation. Climbing has important cultural aspects for climbers and the world at large, and epitomizes the essence of wilderness when done responsibly.

Historically, climbers themselves have had a philosophy of restrained use of fixed anchors, minimizing their placement, using them for safety reasons, or to descend when no other option existed. As with many important issues, to continue this philosophy of minimizing use and visibility of fixed anchors is full of difficulties and nuances. The only way to achieve the goals is through education about wilderness values, and discussion and work with climbers, and the national parks and forests. Mandating and micromanaging will not work. The American Alpine Club and the Access Fund, along with local groups, have long worked with land managers. Climbers have a pretty good record of self-policing/role modeling, minimizing damage to the rock, avoiding raptor nesting areas during breeding season and such.

Some concrete policies:

There should be no sport climbing routes in wilderness, meaning no extensive use of bolts and other fixed anchors, for convenience, for ascent, or for easy lowering back to ground. I believe there is wide consensus in the climbing community for this.

If an anchor is deemed totally necessary, it should only be hand drilled, and camouflaged (i.e. painted color of rock). Slings should be removed if ratty or obvious. Chalk should be limited, and ideally the color of the rock.

All the activities people now do in wilderness impact the land. Horses are hard on trails, but this is managed not by excluding but through education of horse users. Some campers are noisy and leave campfires smoldering, and again education on wilderness values are what will change behaviors.

Thanks for taking my comments. Wilderness and climbing can coexist, and have coexisted very well.

Sincerely,

Beverly Boynton

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