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Comments:

To Whom it May Concern,

Unfortunately, both the National Park Service and the the United State Forest Service agencies propose policies that elevate recreation above wilderness protection that permanently scar and degrade Wilderness through the installation of fixed climbing anchors. We need to protect Wilderness for all to enjoy, from this defacement.

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 wild character. Not only are such installations lasting signs of human development, but they also attract and concentrate use-at great expense to native plants and animals for whom Wilderness is often a last, safe refuge.

Contrary to the assertions of some climbers who oppose maintaining wilderness character, climbing in designated Wilderness areas will not come to an end without permanent fixed anchors-but defacing rock and adjacent areas will. 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.

Not only that, but permanent fixed anchor use and maintenance in Wilderness is-and always has been-prohibited by the Wilderness Act's ban on installations. Nonetheless, some climbing organizations are championing a non-existing right to their installations in Wilderness, at the expense of Wilderness itself, by elevating fixed anchor climbing above existing prohibitions on activities far less permanent.

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. 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. There are plenty of opportunities for climbers with with permanently bolted climbs outside of Wilderness. Your primary duty is to protect Wilderness in its natural state.

Thank you.