

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 1/29/2024 7:34:01 PM

First name: STEPHEN

Last name: LANDER

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Hello, I am a climber and enjoyer of wilderness areas for the past 15 years. While I agree with the spirit of this act in protecting the sanctity of wilderness, I worry greatly about the direct implications this act will have on climbing safety.

Fixed anchors are an essential piece of climbing safety. Routes will continue to be established and people will repeat them. Without fixed anchors, these new establishments will be more dangerous. Route-finding will be more difficult, opportunities for early escape will be fewer. I worry this policy could lead to more emergency scenarios and increased need for SAR efforts in situations that could be easily remedied with the addition of a few bolts.

What worries me more is the impact this will have on existing routes. Climbing is dangerous as is. Anyone with more than a handful of days on rock knows that hardware degrades and you will sometimes come across gear that needs to be replaced. This is an arduous process in itself, especially on long multi-pitch routes where getting to the hardware that needs to be replaced could take hours or even days in itself. That being said, I've been consistently impressed with the stewards of the climbing community in reporting bad hardware and getting it fixed. Having only replaced a few bolts on single pitch routes myself, I know it is hard work. And yet, it gets done organically through the community.

Putting additional oversight and red tape over bolt and anchor replacement has the potential creates the potential for many unsafe scenarios to go unfixed. It may become the norm to keep quiet about bad hardware lest the whole route be closed, possibly forever. We should be looking for solutions that align the goals of the USFS and climbers, and these acts threaten that relationship.

While anyone would agree that a general goal of protecting wilderness is a great cause, the potential dangers this act might precipitate urge me to beg you to reconsider. Thank you.