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Title:

Comments: My name is Erik Harz, I oppose the bill. I have been an active rock climber and alpinist since I turned 18, 25 years ago. Climbing has permanently and profoundly changed my life. It has led to profound adventures all over the world and fostered and solidified very deep bonds with friends and strangers alike. I was always drawn to environmental issues growing up as my parents took me on camping, then hiking and backpacking trips. Climbing has only increased that environmental cause in me. Through climbing, I have witnessed the effects of climate change first hand. I've witnessed glaciers collapsing, and rockfall due to significant heat waves. I've stood at the top of a glacier mind boggled by the boldness of a first ascentist's who placed the first protection bolt 50 feet off the glacier on a blank slab, only to realize that it was simply climate change. The glacier had dropped 40 feet since the first ascent was done just 5 years earlier.

I think that every wilderness activity has an impact. We can work to lessen the impact, but in the end there is still one. The impact that bolts have on the natural environment is so small vs the value they provide to climbers.

Bolts or fixed anchors are necessary for safe passage in the vertical world. They are a legitimate and valid and their use pre-dates the wilderness act. They carry the same value as a trail system for a hiker. This is a problem that does not need to be fixed or regulated. It is an argument that has been taken to the extreme by misinformed advocacy groups such as Wilderness Watch. Taken to the extreme, the same could be applied to trails. The Pacific Crest Trail and the High Sierra Trail in the Sierra in California are great examples. One could argue that those trails absolutely need to be removed, they are an abomination, filled with fixed anchors, artificially placed rock, bolts, rods, bridges, and other mechanized systems that keep these trails in place and they should be removed. The trails cause so much damage to the ecosystems. There are plenty of other trails that can be used outside the wilderness. Where does it end? This bill is already being applied so arbitrarily. As a whole, climbers have self-regulated the placement of bolts in wilderness area and fostered a very good relationship with the NPS and FS. Sure, there are a few climbers, just like any group of people that may not have set the greatest example of bolt use. But those people have been ridiculed by climbers and the bolts have often been removed. I don't think that there is a problem to begin with but if the NPS and FS want to feel more comfortable with regulating fixed anchors then we should pivot to more mainstream practical measures such as the EXPLORE Act.

Further, I recently became a father. I want my 8-month year old daughter to be able to safely travel through the vertical world of the wilderness areas with the occasional fixed piece of protection with her dad. I also don't want to take a massive fall or die leaving my daughter without a father because some extreme bill was passed by misinformed people that leads to the removal of necessary existing fixed protections.