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Comments: An all-out ban on current or new climbing bolts in wilderness areas will have detrimental repercussions to the ever-growing climbing community. Climbers have a long history of adopting, practicing, and promoting Leave No Trace principles to ensure their form of recreation and exploration has a minimally impact on the natural environment. Despite being permanently placed in the rock, bolts are actually a less intrusive option than other ways of descending from rock climbing routes. Nylon slings and cord serve as the primary rappel anchors when bolts are not an option. These contribute to plastic waste in the wilderness, strangling trees, and harming wildlife when they ingest it. They also degrade with UV light, meaning climbers continually add to collections of slings, creating both a safety risk (when climbers don't have additional material to add) and an eyesore (when they do). Having bolted rappel stations, even in wilderness areas, is safer and more consistent with the ethos of wilderness than the alternative.

To continue on the idea of safety, old bolts need to be replaced. Joshua Tree national park has done a fantastic job allowing for this. Proposals for replacement are made, the anchors are evaluated, then the work is done by volunteers, sometimes even with power drills if it leads to a better end-result.

Climbers are already self-policing when it comes to bolts. If a route has more bolts than most people deem necessary, the excessive bolts get removed (for example, The Nose of El Capitan). Remote places that require many hours of travel over difficult terrain also limit the number of bolts people bring and therefore place. In wilderness zones, the requirement of hand-drilling also heavily reduces the amount of bolts someone is willing to place. If it takes 45 minutes or more for a single bolt, climbers already want to use other forms of removable protection if it is available. When those other forms of protection are not available, bolts are the only solution. A line that looks like it could be climbed without bolts sometimes reveals it's true nature only when inspected up close. To criminalize bolts would mean safely retreating from such a location would be impossible. To ask for any bolt to require an application or review would be putting climbers at risk and limiting individuals from actually enjoying the wilderness we are all trying so hard to protect.

There are huge swaths of rock designated as wilderness. To find every bolt, document it, and perhaps remove it would be a huge waste of money by the USFS and NPS, let alone an impossible task.

The line "structures and installations" in the wilderness act was clearly meant to prevent just that: buildings and features like fences, bridges, and roads. To classify climbing bolts in the same way is ludicrous.

Please consider continuing to allow bolts in wilderness areas.