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Organization:

Title:

Comments:

I am writing to express my concerns about the proposed bolting bans in wilderness areas. I have enjoyed outdoor climbing for the last 9 years. However, before I even started climbing outdoors, I worked in multiple Wilderness areas in California while interning for the US Forest Service, and the Bureau of Land Management immediately after graduating from college with a Bachelor's degree in environmental science. Interning as a wilderness ranger, working in the wilderness and recreation department for the BLM, and eventually working for multiple national parks (Yosemite and the Southeast Utah group) gave me insight to how land management agencies work and the reasoning behind some of their policies. In addition, it's given me an incredible appreciation for Wilderness areas with a capital W, having worked and recreated in some of the most stunningly, beautiful landscapes of our country. As such, I believe that these are some of our country's most valuable resources for the mind, body and soul, not to mention the ecological value of wild places.

All that being said, I do strongly suggest these proposed guidelines be reconsidered. First and potentially most importantly, they propose serious safety risks for climbers, who, in the grand scheme of things, are generally a fairly self-sufficient user group. Fixed anchors are an essential part of climbers' safety system, and removing or prohibiting them could potentially result in many more accidents and rescues in remote areas.

Secondly, I know firsthand how understaffed and underfunded these land management agencies can be. It is concerning that these bolting regulations may become a higher priority than some of the more pressing ecological issues land managers face. I understand the impacts of installing fixed hardware in rock, having drilled some bolts myself and assisted in many others' first ascents. However, I do believe there are other more ecologically impactful activities allowed in wilderness areas, and climbing has historically been an appropriate use for over half a century. Also, once installed, the anchors themselves require relatively little maintenance and further impact. Even trying to imagine enforcing these regulations sounds like it would be a nightmare with limited staff and funding and a constant list of other projects.

Climbing in wilderness areas has brought me and countless others moments of joy, serenity, exhilaration, and inspiration like few other areas can. I hope you will reconsider these policies from not only a climbing enthusiast's perspective but one of reason and overall ecological impact.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on these proposals.