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Comments: Hello all,

My name is Chris Freund and I've been a lifelong climber since the age of 10 - for almost 20 years now. Climbing and the Climbing community have taught me more about proper wilderness attention and respect, leave no trace practices, and general attention, love, and admiration for our wilderness areas than I've ever seen any other community practice. I take a lot of pride in that.

When interacting with the rock and the natural world around us, there is a deep, core-human connection that becomes established when hands touch the rock, much like many non-climbers feel when setting hiking boot to hiking path. These two activities are analogous to one another from each respective perspective.

While I do recognize clearly the expansion of access to climbing in general because of cultural shifts and more and more climbing gyms being built in cities across the country, I strongly believe that the language in legislation like this severely limits and even reduces or backtracks progress that has been established for decades and that has been accepted as normal practice.

To dive into the language a bit, the Forest Service draft says "'fixed anchors'" are a type of installation under §4(c) of the Wilderness Act, consistent with the definition of that term in Reference Manual 41 §3.1 as 'anything made by humans that is not intended for human occupation and is left unattended or left behind when the installer leaves the wilderness.'

With reference of course to climbing bolts and fixed anchors in our wilderness areas, they become categorized as an 'installation' that gets left behind when the installer leaves the wilderness. I would humbly argue that walking / hiking path creation, maintenance, and restoration all also fall within the bounds of this definition, and yet we will continue to accept and preserve these acts as normal and necessary so that we may continue to allow all of the people who wish to experience the degree of connection to nature that they personally seek to experience, if for example that means they want to go on a hike through the mountains or through the woods.

Installing and maintaining posts, directions, signage, bridges, or other structures that define or maintain hiking paths are, in my eyes, for hikers or passers-through, analogous to permanent bolts and fixed anchors for climbers. They are necessary to safely traverse the respective paths that we each wish to travel. Without them in place for hikers, creeks and water flow pathways would disrupt and endanger people who wish to hike that path. People would be more at risk of becoming lost or losing the path in general, which can be even more damaging to the environment surrounding them.

Limiting and recategorizing access to bolts and fixed anchors would do the same thing to climbers, who wish to enjoy the same natural environment, only to a different degree. It would also leave routefinding to the passerby open to interpretation, meaning that without a clearly defined line to follow, or a clearly defined end to the route (through lack of bolts or fixed anchors), climbing becomes even more dangerous.

I ask the language to be reconsidered here for these reasons, as I do believe that the way fixed bolts and anchors have been treated until now allows many more folks who wish to pursue connection to nature through climbing can continue to do so to the same degree as the other occupiers and appreciators of this natural space have always done.

Thank you

Chris Freund