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Comments: I am writing to comment on the proposal to classify climbing anchors as installations in Wilderness areas.

I think such a classification, and the concomitant banning of replacement or installation of new climbing anchors, and probable removal of existing routes, would be a tragic mistake and a costly overreach.

For brevity's sake, I set aside the philosophical and theoretical arguments of comparing, say, a single climbing bolt on a 100 foot granite face that nobody but a few climbers see, versus a wooden bridge that is rebuilt every year and used by thousands of hikers to trammel their footsteps into wilderness.

Let's just look at the practical impacts. First, there is already a power tool ban in wilderness areas. This policy has been quite effective at reducing the number of routes in wilderness areas. On some rock types, like granite, it takes a very substantial effort to put in an anchor - let alone an entire route. It just doesn't get accomplished that rapidly, esp in remote areas. Secondly, more and more land resource gets classified as "wilderness" every year. I have always been a huge proponent of this action. I and most climbers will instantly reverse that opinion if this new classification is adopted. Given that we are the biggest fans of the wilderness, this is tragic loss.

Thirdly, we all know that staffing in the NPS and FS are already stretched thin. I worked for the Forest Service for several years and know of this first hand. I suspect that if this classification is adapted, then it's going to be well-paid private contractors who are tasked with the management of bolt removal and possibly development oversight as well. To think that my fellow climbers and I will be paying for this active destruction of a resource that allows us to experience some of the greatest joys of our life, sickens me to my core. I have watched fees go up, campsites at Yosemite for example be removed, access restricted, expensive nonrefundable permits being required, for decades. What used to be one of our country's greatest treasures - available to the poorest most desperate folks in our country - has largely been priced out of their range, while private contracting companies accumulate wealth on our behalf. This is a tragic situation, as it only serves to further alienate our citizenry from our precious wild lands. Not all of us just want to drive through Yosemite, take a few pics, and eat a pizza at Curry Village. We want to hug trees and rocks.

Please keep the wild lands available to all of us who love human-powered motion through the wilderness! This country has a long and rich history of climbing in wilderness. It has inspired millions to love our gorgeous lands. It is unfathomable to break this beloved tie to our past. Preventing maintenance of existing anchors would create a dangerous environment. People will be injured in the most remote of locations. The cost to extricate injured - assuming SAR can reach them on time - and to apply this management plan, would be enormous. Future generations would effectively be unable to embark on their own new explorations, that would fuel their love for the wilds and their desire to preserve these lands. Furthermore, the proposal to limit new routes to "existing" climbing opportunities would create a management madness that would be unenforceable, confusing, and chaotic, subject to personal discretion of land managers. I do not see the practical or philosophical advantage to this new classification system.

Yes, I understand with the number of climbers growing exponentially, this is a situation which must be monitored and addressed. An outright ban on climbing bolts and anchors would be a tragic overreach with long term negative consequences. There are few greater proponents of the wilderness than hikers, mountaineers, and climbers. Don't alienate your biggest supporters on the planet.

Thank you for reading.