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First name: Austin

Last name: Andersen

Organization:

Title:

Comments: To whom it may concern,

I respectfully request that the NPS draft reasonable, rationale, and realistic policies that address bolting in Wilderness Areas. Bolting, specifically anchor bolting, should not be outlawed. People will always climb in Wilderness Areas; there is no stopping that. If an anchor bolt prohibition is enacted, what are the alternatives?

A bolting prohibition will have the result that people can only climb routes that have a walk-off descent option. When such a way off a route is unavailable, they will rappel off of slings or other hardware (i.e. pitons, nuts, cams, etc. that are left behind). This will result in discarded (and unsafe) gear, which will in turn litter the landscape and result in the very "trammeling" that the Wilderness Act sought to prohibit in the first place. While installing fixed bolts certainly may seem to be against the plain language of the Act, the alternative will result in greater harm to the "earth and community of life" that is cherished and sought after by those visiting Wilderness Areas.

Climbing is an inherently dangerous sport. However, fixed bolts do provide a greater margin of safety when it comes to descending from a climb that cannot otherwise be down-climbed or walked off. Compared with the aforementioned slings and placed gear that would otherwise be relied upon for a descent, these options are inherently not as safe as bolts. Therefore, the risk of such gear failing and resulting in an emergency response from SAR crews and park/forest rangers will naturally be greater. Such a response inherently leads to a greater human footprint in these Wilderness Areas and the likelihood of other irreparable damage to sensitive natural areas (i.e. landing areas for helicopters, foot traffic on ecologically important areas, clearing of natural flora for access to emergency staging areas, etc.). Also, the cost (economic, human, and natural) is unnecessarily increased when compared to the relative impact such an anchor bolt would have on that Wilderness Area. Bolts can easily be painted in a way to be effectively invisible; re-establishing a natural feature or community destroyed in a rescue may be impossible.

Climbing provides those that pursue this activity a unique perspective which in turn develops within them a profound desire to protect the natural places they recreate in. By imposing a ban of fixed anchor bolts, the policy not only alienates climbers from visiting Wilderness Areas (in search of other areas with more climber-friendly bolting practices), but also will diminish the further future development of ecologically minded individuals, who will continue to fight for a world where the environment is constantly under attack by much greater forces than those who are simply trying to climb a rock.

I do not support any sort of sport climbing areas in Wilderness Areas and fully encourage the interaction and collaboration between climbers (and their regional/national based advocacy groups), National Park/Forest personnel, Indigenous people native to lands now within the jurisdiction of the Wilderness Act, and the associated scientific community in developing common sense policy that both supports climbing as a recreational pursuit and the natural environment in which it is practiced in.

Thank you for taking the time in reading my comment.

Respectfully,

Austin Andersen, Esq.

Upper Valley Wilderness Response Team (Hanover, NH - SAR)

Sugarbush Ski Patrol (Waitsfield, VT - Green Mountain National Forest)