

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 1/31/2024 1:23:03 AM

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Comments: To Start:

Climbing has always been a sport centered on good stewardship from those who participate. The responsibility for upkeep and management of climbing areas rests on the shoulders of dedicated individuals and nonprofit organizations who care greatly for safe climbing across the United States. This bill intends to block the safe and free use of our public lands for thousands of climbers. It will impede knowledgeable individuals from rebolting potentially dangerous routes and can lead to serious injury or death of other climbers and enact a new precedent for government overreach.

Who's proposing this?

John Curtis, A republican member of the House of Representatives submitted this bill despite his little knowledge of climbing ethics and practices. John Curtis supports the efforts to build a Gondola through Little Cottonwood Canyon disrupting hundreds of acres of historic climbing, terrain yet opposes safe bolting. This occurs to me as blatant hypocrisy on his part and furthers my belief that John Curtis came to the table with little knowledge on the bolting issue.

New Routes:

The bolting argument is no new conversation. Nearly a century ago if you bolted a route you were looked at with disgust. The mentality 80 years ago was to not bolt unless you absolutely had to. However, as the pioneers of rockclimbing expanded their search into new areas they found terrain where bolting was absolutely necessary; Broken crack systems, featured face routes etc. Climbers landed on an unwritten rule where if there was no natural protection available, it was okay to install fixed anchors. This compromise is well known world wide and it lead to the exploration and development of thousands of climbing areas.

If you open up nearly any guide book for a popular climbing area you will find a section at the beginning expressing these same ideals. Often books will ask establishers to question if a route is worth bolting. Will other people climb this route after you bolt it? Are you only establishing a chossy face climb for the bragging rights of a first ascent? Over many years we have left these important decisions up to the establisher and this system has worked very well.

Replacing Bolts on Existing Routes:

Ensuring the safety of rock climbs is very important especially on well established routes receiving a lot of traffic. These anchors receive the most wear & tear thus require upgrading every so often. Impromptu bolt replacements ensure the safe use of our public lands and a permit system will only serve to interrupt safe practices. A questionable anchor will quickly become an unsafe anchor when a climber must await approval to replace. This red tape purely serves as government overreach impeding the upkeep of busy climbing routes.

True Wilderness vs. USFC & NPS Land:

The language of this bill is purposely misleading. This bill refers to NPS & USFS land as wilderness and sparked an argument about the preservation of wilderness land. Despite this bill using this language, it affects land that was heavily developed years ago. Very few climbing areas exist in the space of true wilderness; the kind of wilderness where even MTN bike riding is prohibited. This bill largely effects land with many developed trails, roads, ranger stations, and other infrastructure that presents a much larger environmental impact than bolting ever will. This language purposely misleads voters into believing bolting should be prohibited to preserve the natural landscape. However many climbing areas within USFS & NPS land exist adjacent to existing infrastructure. For example, Joshua Tree National Park boasts nearly 7 thousand rock climbs. Hundreds of which exist next to a road. Under this bill, rebolting these roadside climbs will be prohibited (unless granted a permit) under the grounds that we must protect our wilderness. This occurs to me as ridiculous because in order to access these routes and rebolt them you must drive to them in a car on a road.

I urge the USFS to reject this bill under the grounds that it will greatly impede the efficiency of replacing fixed anchors. Free bolting is paramount to the SAFE and FREE use of our public lands. Thank you.