Data Submitted (UTC 11): 1/31/2024 3:28:50 AM
First name: Colby
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Organization:
Title:
Comments: I oppose the proposed prohibition on climbing bolts in designated wilderness areas.

Here are my reasons:

These bolt installations provide many individuals with the opportunity to explore and utilize designated wilderness areas in a safe manner, which contributes to outdoor recreation, education, and tourism efforts in the surrounding areas.

A prohibition of bolt installations will threaten the safety of climbers.

It is unreasonable for federal agencies to reverse years of precedent and create new guidance about a subject that they are largely uninformed in. Local climbing communities have worked alongside land managers for over 60 years to develop fair use of wilderness areas that coincide with the general non-climbing population.

The climbing community is self-regulating, and there is an established ethic that has been developed over time, which places emphasis on using the minimum quantity of fixed bolts in order to make the climb safe. Bolts are often removed by the climbing community themselves if they are deemed excessive or if they become an eyesore to the non-climbing public. Many of these areas are far removed from the urban population, and are strictly visited by climbers. Climbers are well aware that bolts are a privilege, and do their best to maintain good relationships with land managers without involving legislation. Bolts are often camouflaged to match the color of the rock, and are unnoticeable, even when actively looking for them.

The simple fact is climbing is a very popular sport that is now in the Olympic venue. Climbers will not stop installing bolts, even if it becomes illegal to do so. This sets up a recipe for ongoing litigation and animosity between climbers and land managers, with no easy path to rectify relationships in the future. There are currently millions of in-situ bolts in wilderness areas right now. Federal agencies are unequipped with the resources to remove or catalogue the current bolts, and are setting themselves up for a long uphill battle against an already resilient and resourceful group of recreationists. Lawsuits will prevail, and once symbiotic relationships will deteriorate.

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