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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Hello to the NFS,

My background as a climber began in 1978 when I was a part of a group that rappelled and top-roped climbed off of bolted anchors at the Rock of Ages, during a week at church camp. Each summer, for one week, I got to immerse myself in nature at this magical place in North Carolina and it changed my life for the good! Then starting in 1988, I've been a full-time rock climber and now ice climber for that last 28 winter seasons. Because of climbing, I became a conservationist and environmentalist, and at the age of 54 now, I am still climbing in National Forest and National Parks all over our beautiful country. We always have - and we will always need to in the future - rely on fixed anchors to climb and descend safely.

Climbers have always been able to police ourselves on bolting and the necessity of anchors, keeping those in line via the community awareness that we don't tolerate prolific bolt placements just anywhere you want to place a bolt. The climbers are the best entity to place new bolts, and inspect and replace old bolts and hangers. We now know that having anchors at the top of climbs in sensitive ecosystems (like where I live in the mountains of NC) is better than topping out and walking over to another spot, pulling our ropes across, then rappelling down from a tree. The tourist and hikers are always more of a problem on cliff-top ecosystems rather than climbers, and having fixed anchors at the tops of climbing routes is an asset to preservation.

Climbers are a user group that is more conscientious over protecting the environment and wilderness areas (designated and undesignated like NFS) more than almost any other group of recreationists. It's always been the case in American climbing history. The first Executive Director of the Sierra Club from 1952-1969 was David Brower and he was a serious climber, and he placed the first rock climbing bolt in America during the first ascent of Ship Rock in 1938. That is a wilderness area in New Mexico, regardless of the status, it is wilderness. Fifty six years later, I climbed past that same sacred spot where that first bolt was placed by the environmentalist climber. And for decades I've been involved with so many other climbers, working with the NFS, Blue Ridge Parkway rangers and biologist (rappelling in and taking photos of Peregrine nest for the land managers), crag cleanups, erosion prevention, trail building, and removing spray paint from cliffs by local vandals. We have a great partnership between us climbers and the NFS and NPS. And when I say we, that's all climbers and groups, including the Carolina Climbers Coalition, The Access Fund, and the American Alpine Club. The Park Service and Forest Service knows that they can rely on climbers to find that balance between Recreation/Preservation/Conservation.

Please don't put this on the land managers to prohibit fixed anchors and try to manage all of that. I want my kids and grandkids to be good stewards of the land and be able to climb and descend safely, utilizing fixed anchors whether it be in Yosemite, the Black Canyon, or the Linville Gorge. We climbers have a good understanding of fixed anchors in America, compared to other countries like Spain, France, Greece, and many others. We don't overdo it here, and what anchors are there don't come close to the disturbance to the land that even a single trail causes in a Wilderness Area.

Thank you all for listening to the American climbers respond to your proposed bans and regulations. Have faith in us that it's best that we continue to collaborate with each other, protect climbing access and anchors, and allow recreation for the benefit of our souls. We are a passionate lot about adventure, exploration, conservation, and safety by using fixed hardware and anchors. Also, due to the budget cuts to the NPS and NFS over the years by our legislators, relying on working with the climbers can go a long way with education and maintenance of our forest and wilderness areas. Let's please keep it that way!

Have a great season,
Lynn Willis