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Comments: Dear Policy Makers,

As a climber for over 24 years and the owner of a climbing gym, I have keenly observed the evolution of the climbing community. I believe there is an issue that warrants our attention. Climbing is experiencing a surge in popularity due to events like the Olympics, movies, and the proliferation of climbing gyms. However, the dynamic within the climbing community has shifted noticeably. The ratio of veteran climbers to newcomers has tilted, and many new climbers lack guidance on the fundamentals of climbing.

There is an increasing need for climbing facilities like mine to play a more proactive role in educating climbers about the ethics of outdoor climbing. However, the two proposals currently under consideration are deeply flawed. Those of us drawn to climbing typically possess a particular disposition driven by a desire to explore and to witness the unseen. This inclination embodies two spirits: that of a pioneer and that of a pirate. When channeled positively, the pioneer spirit drives us to explore while preserving the environment. Conversely, the pirate spirit rebels against authority and may lead to disregard for environmental conservation efforts.

I, for one, am deeply concerned that these proposals will awaken the inner pirate in climbers, undermining the very results you seek to achieve. Preserving the natural world is paramount, and I believe there is a way to accomplish this by appealing to the inner pioneer within climbers. Just as permits are required for fishing and hunting, why not implement a similar system for bolting and climbing? This system could include a comprehensive test designed to instill a sense of stewardship and responsibility among climbers.

By engaging the climbing community constructively, we can work together to protect our natural spaces while ensuring climbers can continue to enjoy their pursuits. A nominal fee could be charged for the permit, with climbers required to renew it annually. This approach not only generates revenue for parks but also harnesses the climbing community as a valuable resource.

Imagine a scenario where climbers proudly carry their climbing permits, demonstrating their commitment to responsible climbing practices. Those without permits would be gently reminded to obtain one or forego climbing in designated areas. We do not wish to jeopardize our right to climb, and I believe that by collaborating, we can ensure adequate funding for conservation efforts.

Let us work together to find a solution that respects both the needs of climbers and the imperative to preserve our natural heritage.