



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Forest  
Service

Southwestern  
Region

517 Gold Avenue SW  
Albuquerque NM 87102-0084

Reply to 2320

Date MAY 08 1991

Subject Report from Rock Bolt Task Group

To Elizabeth Estill, Director of Recreation, WO

On behalf of the Task Group on the issue of Rock Bolts in Wilderness I am pleased to submit to you our report and recommendations

In my view strongly supported by others, the effort commitment, and products that have resulted from this exercise demonstrate the highest form of public service cooperation that we can hope to achieve. The Task Group gave unselfishly of their knowledge and energy to resolve conflicts and create solutions. Time and expense to accomplish this effort was almost entirely voluntary including that of Forest Service personnel. The agency might be well served to regard this as a model of successful "conflict resolution." To that end special recognition needs to be given to David Harmer who expertly and tirelessly facilitated the process.

The report represents the full consensus of the appointed Task Group. This was not easily achieved. There was considerable time spent in discussion of the philosophic perspectives of individuals and groups as to what should be considered appropriate in wilderness. I am sorry that I am unable to share with you the full text of those discussions as they were very important to the conclusions we reached. The Task Group and their invited guests shared considerable insights as to what is involved in the activity of Rock Climbing and the use of fixed anchors as well as the meaning of wilderness. We all learned a tremendous amount. I believe our recommendations represent a fair and practical solution to the issue and are in keeping with the ethic of wilderness.

If you have any questions regarding the philosophy process or policy recommendations you are welcome to call any or all of the Task Group members. If it is your choice to meet with us as a group we would be pleased to accommodate that request as well.

  
L. ROGER DEAVER  
Director of Recreation

Enclosure



NATIONAL TASK GROUP  
ON FIXED ANCHORS  
IN WILDERNESS

Phoenix Arizona  
January 18th to April 13th  
1991

Jim Abbott  
Roger Deaver  
Anne Fege  
Marty Hornick  
Michael Jimmerson  
Ray Keeler  
Jesse King  
Armando Menocal  
Jerry Nelson

## HISTORICAL SUMMARY

The use of fixed anchors in the Superstition Wilderness was brought to public attention by Forest Service personnel and concerned citizens. Several fixed anchor users and fixed anchor sites were reported to the Forest Service administration in the fall of 1989. This was followed by a series of communications and meetings between the Mesa Ranger District and the Tonto National Forest Supervisor's office during the first half of 1990.

During this process the Tonto National Forest placed restrictions on the further use of fixed anchors in the Wilderness. Also, included in this process was advisement from Staff Counsel M A Joca with the Office of General Counsel and several meetings with the Arizona Mountaineering Club and the American Alpine Club.

The restrictions placed on fixed anchors were appealed by the American Alpine Club and Arizona Mountaineering Club. The appeal was dismissed based on the fact that the restrictions were a clarification of the current regulations and definitions from the Wilderness Act. There was later an inspection of fixed anchor sites in the Superstition Wilderness by the Forest Supervisor's office and meetings with the Deputy Regional Forester.

This resulted in a letter to the Chief of the Forest Service requesting the formation of a Task Group to review the current situation and recommend possible solutions. The Arizona Mountaineering Club enacted a voluntary moratorium on fixed anchors in the Superstition Wilderness. The National Task Group on Fixed Anchors met in January and March of 1991 and created recommendations.

### THE PROCESS

#### 1/19/91 First Meeting of Task Group

#### Task Group Members

|                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| Jim Abbott        | - Forest Supervisor Coronado National Forest                                 |
| Roger Deaver      | - Director of Recreation Southwestern Region                                 |
| Anne Fege         | - Wilderness & Special Areas Specialist<br>Washington Office, Forest Service |
| Marty Hornick     | - Trails Coordinator, Inyo National Forest                                   |
| Michael Jimmerson | - Access Fund  |
| Ray Keeler        | - National Speleological Society   |
| Jesse King        | - Colorado Outward Bound School  |
| Armando Menocal   | - American Alpine Club/Southwest Region                                      |
| Jerry Nelson      | - Chair, Palo Verde Group, Sierra Club                                       |
| David Harmer      | - Facilitator Deputy Director of Recreation                                  |

## Logistics and Recorders:

|                |   |
|----------------|---|
| Ronald Bradsby | -Wilderness Specialist, Southwestern Region   |
| Connie Lang    | - Mesa Ranger District, Tonto National Forest |
| Anne Fischer   | - Facilities Engineer, Tonto National Forest  |

## Chronology

A Inquiry Letter from Mesa Ranger District to Tonto NF  
B Letter from Forest Supervisor  
C Meeting with Forest Supervisor  
D Letter from Staff Counsel, Joca  
E Letter from Forest Supervisor  
F Appeal by AAC & AMC  
G Appeal dismissed by Regional Forester  
H Inspection of Superstition by Forest Service  
I Meeting with Deputy Regional Forester  
J Voluntary Moratorium  
K Letter to Chief from Deputy Regional Forester  
L Formation of Task Group  
M Field Trip to bolting site by Task Group  
N First Meeting of Task Group - 1/19/91  
O Research, data collection, and definitions, by Task Group  
P Second Meeting of Task Group - 3/8-9/91  
Q First Draft of Recommendations circulated  
R Telephone conference 3/18/91  
S Second Draft of Recommendations circulated  
T Third and Final Meeting of Task Group 4/12-13/91  
U Third Draft circulated  
V Final comments sent to Roger Deaver  
W Recommendations submitted to Chief's Office

## Presentations

The following people gave detailed presentations during the first meeting of the task Group. During this process each presenter gave a ten to fifteen minute presentation that was followed by questions and clarifications from the Task Group.

|                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| Jerry Nelson      | - Chair, Palo Verde Group, Sierra Club        |
| Jim Vaaler        | - Sierra Club                                 |
| Paul Diefenderfer | - Arizona Mountaineering Club                 |
| Fred Koehn        | - Individual Wilderness User                  |
| Del Smith         | - National Outdoor Leadership School          |
| Rusty Baillie     | - Prescott College                            |
| Hartley Gardner   | - Central Arizona Mountain Rescue Association |
| Ray Keeler        | - National Speleological Society              |
| Armando Menocal   | - American Alpine Club/Access Fund            |
| Anne Fege         | - National Leader for Wilderness Management   |

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY  
OF RECOMMENDATIONS**

Through consensus, this Task Group recommends that National Policy be created to guide the local management of fixed anchors in National Forest Wilderness. The management process needs to include the local Forest in cooperation with fixed anchor users, other wilderness users, and the public.

- 1 Climbing, caving, and canyoneering are historical and established recreation activities in Wilderness.
- 2 Fixed Anchors are an integral part of rock climbing, caving, and canyoneering.
- 3 Fixed anchors represent an intrusion on the Wilderness resource and may have varying degrees of resource impact.
- 4 Cooperation and awareness are key to effective management.
- 5 Placement of fixed anchors must be managed in accordance with the process set forth in these recommendations.
- 6 Removal of fixed anchors must be subject to a decision process as set forth in these recommendations because removal may cause resource damage or present unacceptable safety hazards to climbers, cavers, and canyoneers.

Ultimately final authorization and method of implementation for management of any fixed anchor use will be determined by the Forest Service.

These recommendations provide for the improved protection of National Forest Wilderness and to ensure a high quality wilderness experience for all future visitors.

## DETAIL OF RECOMMENDATIONS

### Fixed Anchors in National Forest Wilderness

- There needs to be National Forest Wilderness policy guidelines created to lead the management of fixed anchors in Wilderness
- Climbing, caving, and, canyoneering are historical and established recreation activities in Wilderness
- Fixed Anchors are an integral part of rock climbing, caving, and canyoneering
- The Forest will treat all wilderness users employing fixed anchors equally (i e , caving, climbing, and canyoneering should all have the same national policy regarding fixed anchors)

### Management of Fixed Anchors in National Forest Wilderness

- Fixed anchors represent an intrusion on the wilderness resource and may have varying degrees of resource impacts
- Placement of fixed anchors must be managed in accordance with the process set forth in these recommendations
- Planning and education to gain public understanding and acceptance will be employed as a first step in implementation
- Cooperation and awareness are keys to effective management
- Management of fixed anchors will occur in accordance with, and implemented through Forest Land Management Plans, Wilderness Implementation Schedules, and Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC)
- Power drills or other electro-mechanical devices for fixed anchor placement are not allowed in National Forest Wilderness
- When using LAC, the Cole process is suggested for use of fixed anchors

#### The Cole Eight Step Modified LAC Process

- 1 Develop a Task Group of managers and public participants
- 2 Inventory all wilderness areas for fixed anchor placement
- 3 Monitor periodically
- 4 Inventory areas of concern for fixed anchor placement
- 5 Overlay the resource values which may be threatened (Examples related to fixed anchors from other areas of public lands peregrine habitat threatened and endangered plants and animals cultural sites, geologic formations of unique structure )
- 6 Zone based on potential amounts of fixed anchors allowed (Each zone should determine whether fixed anchors increases, decreases or remains at the present level of use ) Identify where fixed anchors are allowed on an overlay Monitor change in use/placement

- 7 Tackle issue in areas where a problem is perceived
- 8 Restrict only if other methods fail

All fixed anchors will be camouflaged, with caves excepted

- Management will be at the local level and may employ any of the following procedures:
  - a Cave Management Plan
  - b Climbing Zones
  - c Vertical trails
  - d Individual Route Applications
  - e Canyoneering Routes
  - f Special Use Permit
  - g Special Management Plans
- Final authorization of any fixed anchors will be determined by the Forest Service
- Authorization for the use of fixed anchors may be granted when the activity is Wilderness dependent. The following criteria will be applied
  - a Wilderness setting is the focus rather than the route
  - b Placement of fixed anchors protects the Wilderness Resource
  - c Wilderness dependence relates to climbing, caving and canyoneering activities that can be done only within wilderness, including but not limited to, the ascent or descent of prominent features and remote locations dependent on being in a wilderness setting
  - d To allow access that cannot be achieved otherwise
  - e The density of fixed anchors will be no more than appropriate to achieve Wilderness dependent objectives

Removal

- All fixed anchors existing prior to Wilderness designation may remain in accordance with the historical use provision of the Wilderness Act
- Removal of fixed anchors will be a product of interaction between Forest Service, other wilderness users, the public, and users of fixed anchors
- Removal of fixed anchors also must be considered and subject to a decision process because removal may cause resource damage or present unacceptable safety hazards to climbers, cavers, canyoneers, (who expect fixed anchors to be in place) the following guidelines will apply
  - Whether installed before Wilderness designation
  - Net damage to the rock
  - Whether visual impact can be mitigated by other means, i.e. camouflage
  - Whether access will be precluded
  - Whether removal of fixed anchors will create a safety hazard
  - Density of fixed anchors
  - Degree of Wilderness dependency
  - Risk to other resource values (i.e. threatened and endangered species, cultural resources, etc.)

- Seek input from fixed anchor users, other wilderness users and the public

#### Maintenance

- Maintenance will be performed by users of fixed anchors in cooperation with local Forest Service Unit, other wilderness users and the public

#### Rescue Operations

- Fixed anchors may be used in rescue operations. The use of camouflaged anchors should also be encouraged, where appropriate
- Removal shall be left to the discretion of the rescue team in cooperation with Forest Service
- Fixed anchors should be reported to local Forest Service officials
- Any outstanding issues relating to fixed anchors should be settled between local Forest Service Unit and rescue teams