

Sport Bolt Drilling in the Wilderness

Summary and Recommendation from IPWA

(button link fixed at the bottom of this page)

We want to let all of our volunteers and supporters know about a piece of legislation pending in Congress named [Protect America's Climbing Rock Act \(PARC\)](#). This Act, supported by many climbing organizations and publications, has recently been added to a larger piece of legislation called the EXPLORE Act. The 1964 Wilderness Act prohibits "Installations" in the Wilderness; the PARC Act gets around this by declaring that drilling permanent metal bolts into rock faces does not constitute an installation. Sure seems like an installation to IPWA!

[The NPS strongly opposes](#) the Protect America's Climbing Act because it has the potential to usurp the NPS (and USFS) of their ability to manage lands based on the needs of each park and its unique environment. Climbers groups such as the Access Fund [disagree with this](#) and contend that climbers can best determine what's best for the land management of climbing routes.

By potentially enshrining the placement of climbing bolts as a protected activity in all Federal Wilderness and an exception to certain laws defined in the Wilderness Act, it's reasonable to believe these acts can further crack open the door for other special interest groups that want to push back on how the Wilderness Act is implemented, and potentially tie the hands of land managers on how this special use affects everyone else. For example, national mountain bike associations have previously pushed bills to [allow mountain bike access in Wilderness](#) using similar language as the climbing community uses.

We join with the National Park Service (NPS) and several Wilderness Advocacy groups in Colorado in opposing the PARC Act for the following reasons:

1. Drilling permanent bolts will cause damage to and scarring of rock faces in Wilderness Areas.
2. Sport-bolted routes publicized on social media are likely to create new social trails and other recreation-related impacts deep in our Wilderness Areas.
3. The PARC Act would open the door to other special interest groups that want to carve out special uses in Wilderness Areas for their own sports.
4. The PARC Act usurps the NPS and USFS authority to manage lands based on the needs of each park and its unique environment.
5. It's worth valuing the protection of wilderness for everyone over a specific group's desire for sport. We feel that if you can't safely climb a rock wall in the Wilderness without fixed bolts, leave it unclimbed.

What you can do:

1. Learn more on Wilderness Watch's website [here](#). This link includes an email opposing the PARC portion of the EXPLORE Act that you can simply adopt and send.
2. Email your elected representatives directly - here are the links:
[Senator Hickenlooper](#)

[Senator Bennet](#)

[Representative Neguse](#) (if you live in CD2)

3. The Forest Service (FS) is seeking [public input](#) on proposed guidance for managing climbing and protecting natural and cultural resources in wilderness areas. [The comment period is until January 30th, 2024.](#)

Click the button below to open the FS public input link (the submission form is at the bottom of the page):

[Click here to open the FS Public Input Form](#)

Thank you for helping the IPWA keep the wilderness "wild"!

Sincerely,

The IPWA Board

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