United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Southern Nevada District Office
4701 N. Torrey Pines Drive
Las Vegas, NV 89130
http://www.blm.gov/nv/st/en/fo/lvfo.1.html

MAR 31 2010

In Reply Refer To:
8305 (NVS00520)

NOTIFICATION OF PROPOSED ACTION
LANDS OF THE NATIONAL WILDERNESS PRESERVATION SYSTEM

RAINBOW MOUNTAIN WILDERNESS

To Whom It May Concern:

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is required to inform all affected or interested persons or organizations about any proposed action or unauthorized activity occurring within BLM Wilderness and Wilderness Study Areas. The following information is a request from the Las Vegas Climbers' Liaison Council (CLC) to replace old protection and anchor bolts in a designated Wilderness Area within Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area (NCA). In the past, the CLC has been approved for and conducted replacement of old permanent fixed anchors (bolts) within most of the major canyons of Rainbow Mountain Wilderness, in a manner identical to their current request. A new Environmental Assessment (EA) will be completed for the proposed action to replace the previous and now expired EA, in addition to a minimum activity/minimum tool analysis.

Background

Red Rock Canyon NCA is one of the top five technical rock climbing areas in the country, with over 60,000 people visiting specifically to rock climb. At the time the bolts were placed over 20 years ago, the standard was a ¼ inch diameter and 1½ – 2 inch long metal bolt. After more than 20 years of being exposed to the elements, the ¼ inch bolts are rusted, have loosened from the rock, and are near the end of their life cycle. During a fall taken by a rock climber, the forces generated can shear or dislodge the ¼ inch bolts resulting in a potential long and deadly fall.

The BLM recognizes that technical rock climbing is a legitimate and appropriate use of designated Wilderness Areas. Technical rock climbing, including the use of bolts, has a history that predates the Wilderness Act and this designated Wilderness represents a unique resource. As established by the Wilderness Act and the BLM's regulations on management of designated Wilderness found in 43 CFR 6302, climbers or others may not use power drills to place bolts in non-emergency situations. Climbers may use hand-powered drills to place bolts.

Both the BLM and CLC are committed to cooperative efforts which aid in protecting the designated Wilderness and maintaining its appropriate recreational uses. The Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area Resource Management Plan and Record of Decision (May 2005) gives specific direction to "manage rock climbing in partnership with the 'Climber's Liaison Council' (CLC)." Furthermore, this land use plan provides general guidance on bolt replacement in section 4B2.5d which states, "Replacement of existing bolts in the aforementioned locations [Wilderness Study Areas, Wilderness Areas] is allowed for safety purposes, but should be presented to the Climber's Liaison Council for review and concurrence." The BLM and the CLC recognize that coordination and cooperation is essential in order to provide for the health and safety in the use and enjoyment of the designated Wilderness, maintain wilderness characteristics, and manage designated Wilderness under the Wilderness Act of 1964.

Location

Rainbow Mountain Wilderness

- Township 21S, Range 58E, Section 5 and 4
  - Willow Springs (Lost Creek and Hidden Falls Wall – 50 bolts)
- Township 21S, Range 58E, Section 8 and 9
  - Icebox Canyon (Frigid Air Buttress to the south side of the Hidden Wall – 30 bolts)
- Township 21S, Range 58E, Section 9, 16, 17, 20, 21
  - Pine Creek (Community Pillar/Magic Mountain area, Crabby Appleton Wall, Challenger Wall, Mescalito (north side), Beer and Ice Gully to Flight Path Area – 100 bolts)
- Township 21S, Range 58E, Section 20 and 21
  - Juniper Canyon (Brownstone Wall, Rainbow Wall, Cloud Tower area, Ginger Buttress – 40 bolts)
- Township 21S, Range 58E, Section 20, 21
  - Oak Creek (Solar Slab Area, Eagle Wall, Painted Bowls, Celebration Wall – 60 bolts)
- Township 21S, Range 58E, Section 28, 33
  - Mt. Wilson (East Face – 30 bolts)
- Township 21S, Range 58E, Section 33
  - First Creek (Lotta Balls Wall – 10 bolts)
- Township 22S, Range 58E, Section 10 and 13
  - Black Velvet Wall (Velvet Wall, Whiskey Peak, Corduroy Ridge, Western Spaces Wall – 50 bolts
- Township 22S, Range 58E, Section 22
  - Windy Peak (East Face, South Face – 30 bolts)

Proposed Action

Due to the fact that many of these permanent fixed anchors were placed over 20 years ago, before the proliferation of modern fixed anchors, many of these bolts are unsafe for their intended purpose, be that climbing protection or rappel anchors. The CLC is proposing to do a 1:1, bolt for bolt, replacement of unsafe old bolts. For practical purposes, rebolting will be done in a team of two or three, but not more than four people. They will drive on established roads,

outside of the designated Wilderness, to the trailheads and hike existing designated trails and social trails to the base of the routes. They will attempt, whenever possible, to remove the old bolts and reuse the hole. If unable to remove the old bolt without damaging the rock, the bolt will be cut off with a hand saw and the hole patched with epoxy and camouflaged with rock dust to match the surrounding area. The old ¼ bolts would be replaced with new stainless steel 3/8 – ½ inch diameter bolts 3½ – 4 inches long. The equipment used to place new bolts would include a standard climbing hammer and hand drill (non-motorized), such as the Petzl Rocpec. Rebolting would occur during the primary climbing season in the designated Wilderness: spring and fall, and occasionally summer on shady walls. For the purposes of mitigating social impact, they would endeavor to choose times to do this work that would not interfere with other users.

Please submit comments to the District Manager for consideration and use in evaluating and processing the proposed action at the above address. Alternately, comments may be sent to lvwilderness@nv.blm.gov. All comments must be received by the closing date of this comment period on May 7th, 2010. A decision on the proposed action is anticipated for June 2010 with implementation thereafter. If you have any questions regarding this notification please contact Sendi Kalcic, Wilderness Planner at 702-515-5297.

Sincerely,

Mary Jo Rugwell
District Manager