



Max Tepfer/Submitted photo

This pile of old bolts and hangers is a typical haul after a day's work of replacing hardware at Smith Rock State Park. These bolts are heavy to carry in and out of the climbing areas.

Climbing

Continued from B1

The person who first establishes the route generally places the hardware themselves.

All hardware deteriorates after being exposed to elements such as wind, sand and water over time. Some environments are more harsh on the metals than others.

The amount of traffic a specific climb gets can also determine how quickly hardware degrades. On average, the hardware should be replaced about every 30 years. It is important for the safety of all climbers that hardware be replaced before it ages or corrodes to the point of failure.

Everyone who climbs in Central Oregon benefits from the placement of this hardware. However, only a select few climbers put in the effort to replace it.

Part of the reason for this is that it takes specific knowledge and skills to replace hardware. Not to mention it takes time and energy. Still, hardware replacement is a grassroots effort and done completely on a volunteer basis. These people provide a huge benefit to the climbing community, but their efforts often go unnoticed and unappreciated.

Max Tepfer, who learned to climb 20 years ago in Central Oregon, is one of those volunteers.

He points out that "staying ahead of hardware replacement is important for safety, but also allows us to do it in a more sustainable manner. If we wait too long, the bolts corrode to the point that they can't be easily removed. When this happens, the old hole can't be reused and we have to

Despite this being hard work and time-consuming, Max Tepfer says he "enjoys the process of it and it's very satisfying to use my free time to better a place that has been a transformative part of my life. Our climbing areas are where our community forms and gathers. Climbing bolts and anchors are at the foundations of those climbing areas."

drill a new one?"

When considering the hundreds of routes at Smith Rock, replacing bolts and anchors can seem like a daunting task. The climbers that replace hardware prioritize bolts by the most urgent need; otherwise, they go by age which they can tell by the type of hardware used.

Max adds that climbers should always be on the lookout for bolts that need replacement. He says, "the most urgent bolts will wiggle in their hole despite any effort to tighten them with a wrench."

If you're a climber, you can report a bad bolt to the High Desert Climbers Alliance through their website www.highdesert.rocks. Click on the menu link "Report Bad Hardware."

Despite this being hard work and time-consuming, Max says he "enjoys the process of it and it's very satisfying to use my free time to better a place that has been a transformative part of my life."

He adds that it allows him to help pass the opportunities climbing has offered him to the next generation. Max points out that, "Our climbing areas are where our community forms and gathers. Climbing bolts and anchors are at the foundations of those climbing areas."

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