Forest Service and all Federal Land Managers

I’m writing this in response to the Forest Services public comment period regarding E-bikes on Federal Lands trails. FSM 7700-7710 e-BIKE #ORMS-2619.

As we all know that the popularity of E-bikes in the US has greatly increased in the past few years and especially in the last several months as Covid-19 has pushed many people outside in search of socially distanced activities. Covid-19 aside the rapidly growing E-bike industry has brought us new and exciting technologies to the biking world not just to our cities for commuters but also to the mountain biking world.

I do realized that this is written in response to trail access on Federal lands throughout the country and not area specific, but I however live in an area in Alaska where the non E-bike accessible trails far out number the places that are legal to ride. I own a new bike rental business on the Kenai Peninsula of Alaska and I rent both Mountain bikes and E-bikes. However the E-bikes don’t rent as much as the regular bikes do since they can’t be ridden where the regular bikes can. This has caused an economic tight spot for a new business.

As E-mountain biking (Emtn) has gained in popularity in other parts of the world it has been held at bay here in the US. Many countries have become E-MTN bike destinations, such as these top 5: Namibia,Croatia,Switzerland,Slovenia and Spain. The US could become a destination as well if our trails were made accessible, think of the economic impact that this could have in the future. As E-bike technology gains in popularity in the U.S. as it has in Europe, it’s hard to deny the fact that it’s here to stay.

Emtn have some misconceptions that sway peoples’ views or feelings about allowing them on our trails, such as the words “throttle”,”motor” and “they’re noisy” which cause one to envision a motorcycle ripping up the trail throwing a rooster tail in it’s wake and disturbing the solitude for miles around. When in fact there is very little noise from an e-bike and even with a throttle these bikes can’t climb most hills without rider input. With the legal wattage limitations set at a maximum of 750w or 1 hp the “motor” will assist the rider up the hills as long as the rider is pedaling the bike.

Many people are “haters” of e-bikes until they ride one, myself included. However after a construction accident and multiple surgeries my ability to ride a regular bike has been greatly diminished. The first time I rode an E-bike I knew that this was a game changer for me, not only could I ride again I could go further and not pay the consequences later. Allowing Emtn on our trails will allow older people who used to ride but had to cut back or quit due to age or injuries the opportunity to enjoy the trails and scenery everyone else does.

It is my hope that all of the comments submitted will have a positive impact on deciding to open the trails for this new and exciting technology.

Thank you for your careful considerations on this matter.