

Commenting on FSM 7700 and 7710 E-bikes #ORMS-2619

Dear Forrest Service;

As a trail-biker, I recognize that I should not try and go everywhere. When the trail narrows and the surrounding environment show its virginity, I leave my bike behind and walk. And there are many areas that I would not dare to tread on, but that's just me. Not everyone feels the way I do, so to protect a natural-place, I would rather sacrifice my access than bring thoughtless and selfish destruction. That is what rules, and wilderness access guidelines are for – the greater good of the environment, not the greater enjoyment of the rider or hiker.

As a trail-bike enthusiast, I am concerned that allowing e-bikes to access the same trails that I can ride, using only my skills and physical determination, will result in harm to wilderness areas. An e-bike is not a trail bike. The access that an e-bike affords a rider is greater than the access my stamina and physical conditioning can give me on a traditional pedal-only bike. Therefore an e-bike rider will go where I can not go, they will do it more often, and they will take more people with them.

This increased access, though it may seem egalitarian and positive at first, will have very negative impacts on the natural flora and fauna traversed. If the US Forest Services would not let motorized vehicles access the trails through an area, the USFS should not allow e-bike access.

Furthermore, from my experience, it is much more likely that an e-bike rider will put themselves into situations that require the help of others to extract them from a wild area, putting further negative pressure on fragile environments. The powered-access afforded by an e-bike will unavoidably bring people who would not usually venture so deep into off-road regions. This access and the inevitable mechanical breakdown that comes with such access will compromise their ability to extract themselves safely.

For me, the whole purpose of exploring natural areas on a bike is to experience the physical, mental, and emotional challenges that come with such forays. The entire experience of riding a trail-bike reinforces the importance of exploring with a quiet footprint, disturbing nothing off the trail's edge. The exertion required calls forth the reminder that respecting the natural landscape around me is a privileged obligation. I've seen this balance fail time and again when the biker sits astride a motorized vehicle, which an e-bike sure is; the human footprint is always larger than it need be.

Thank you for your service to us all,
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