

October 21, 2020

Director, Recreation Staff
U.S. Forest Service
1400 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20250-1124

(submitted via electronic mail)

Re: E-Bikes on Forest Service Lands

I am a life-time user of national forest trails as a hiker, camper, backpacker, photographer, birder and botanist accompanied by my dog. I value non-motorized trails for recreation.

I oppose any change in management directives that would allow any class of vehicle with a motor – including all classes of e-bikes, which by definition have a motor – to be allowed on non-motorized trails. These non-motorized trails should continue to be dedicated to human powered, primitive quiet recreation. Opening non-motorized trails to e-bikes would forever change the backcountry experience for me.

I usually chose to hike on trails that are open only for non-mechanized users because I do not enjoy being forced to step off the trail and get my dog moved out of the way by encounters with mountain bikers who do not want to yield to hikers. E-bikes have the capability to go faster than mountain bikes, which would make them even more hazardous to me and my dog and fundamentally change my trail experience.

The national forests already have millions of miles of roads and trails open to motorized recreation. E-bikes should be restricted to roads and trails designated in Travel Management Plans as open to motorized recreation.

Regarding the Forest Service's proposed updates to directives that create an e-bike definition and adopt the three classes of e-bikes for designation as motor vehicles, I find this classification system confusing since all e-bikes look similar. Regardless of the size of the motor, all e-bikes are motorized by the Forest Service definition. Using the three classes of e-bikes would seem to make Travel Management Plans more complicated for land managers to administer and for the public to understand.

Sincerely,

Susan Saul