October 20, 2020

Regarding: FSM77700/7710 E bikes #ORMS 2619

Forest Service Proposed E bike Rules

I am writing this letter to present information and my opinion regarding the proposed e-bike rules on Forest Service land.

I believe that e-bikes should remain classified as motor vehicles and only allowed on motorized roads outside Forest Service lands. I am an avid hiker and cyclists living in Southern California. I have seen a dramatic increase in electric bikes in this past year on the pedestrian/bike way between Huntington State Beach from the Santa Ana River , north to Bolsa Chica State Beach at Warner. This is a distance of about 7 miles including Huntington City Beach and pier.

My main objection to e-bike use is there is NO enforcement of rules and regulations pertaining to these vehicles. In particular the Huntington City beach walk/bike way posts the speed of bikes at 5 mph when pedestrians are present (which is continually) and 10 mph when pedestrians are not present. I have walked this walk/bikeway for decades and never seen anyone receive a warning or citation. All of the bikes are traveling at a higher rate of speed than the stated 5 mph when pedestrians are present and most are traveling over 10 mph. I know this because I have ridden this stretch of walk/bike way and have noted the speed at which other cyclists pass me.

There has been a concern for a long time about the speed of the standard bike now e-bike are on the walk/bike way and show no regard for the posted speed limit usually traveling faster than pedal bikes with no regard for pedestrians. Without any enforcement of the current rules it will get worst as more e-bikes that can travel faster without pedaling, continue to use the beach path.

Again the issue of enforcement of the rules for the bikes and e-bikes on forest rails is of utmost importance. In my local area in Orange County we have the Santa Ana Mountains, part of the Cleveland National Forest. Ortega Highway in south OC bisects a large part of these mountains. On the west side of the highway is national forest land, campgrounds and trails (open to mountain bikes) and the other side of the road is the San Mateo Wilderness. I hike in the wilderness area on a regular basis. John Kaiser also with the Sierra Club is the trail master for our local group and does trail maintenance in the San Mateo Wilderness. Many times we have encountered mountain bike riders in this wilderness area and they have no concern that they are in an area closed to bikes.

My point is that there is little if any enforcement of regulations regarding bike use on trails in a designated wilderness area. Now e-bikes come along and without constant enforcement will adopt the same behavior. These bikes can travel faster and further than the standard mountain bike in many cases without expending physical energy. The bikes are usually quiet and on trails frequented by hikers.

The loser in this situation is the person/family who wants to go for a walk or hike in the local mountains or on the local beach path. Something may happen when walkers/hikers are injured by someone riding an e-bike to fast or in a wilderness area and the government agency is found liable because there was no enforcement of the rules and regulations.

Please take this information into consideration as you develop your regulations. I see what is happening on our local beach way with the increase of e-bikes and what can happen on forest trails without enforcement.

Please keep e-bikes listed as motor vehicles and off our public lands

Sincerely,

Ron Schrantz