



October 26, 2023

Todd Stiles, Jackson District Ranger
Bridger-Teton National Forest
PO Box 1689
Jackson WY 83001

Proposed Expansion of EMTBs Access on the Bridger-Teton Jackson District

Dear Ranger Stiles:

Please accept these comments as the support for the Proposal from the Advocates for Multiple-Use of Public Lands (“AMPL”) for the Proposed Expansion of EMTBs on the Bridger- Teton NF’s Jackson Ranger District (“the Proposal”). AMPL is also recommending refinements and clarifications for the Proposal to address issues around the administration of the Proposal and to avoid future conflicts and challenges that may result from conflicting standards in subsequent proposals. AMPL recognizes the sport of E-mountain biking is growing and that these users have extremely limited access to their public lands. E-mountain bikers are seeking a traditional, single-track riding experience with the aid of a pedal assist motor. This allows riders to travel further and makes the sport of mountain biking more inclusive, providing those with physical disabilities or limitations a means to access single-track trails. This Proposal would greatly benefit these users while having little to no impact on other more traditional mechanized users.

AMPL is aware that the term e-bike encompasses a WIDE variety of bikes that consumers can purchase in retail shops or online. While this variety of uses and equipment provides significant benefits for recreational access it also presents management challenges. This Proposal is strictly limited to class-1 EMTBs and we believe this is critical to the success of the Proposal. These bikes only provide propulsion while the rider is pedaling. Assistance from the motor is cut off as soon as the bike reaches 20mph. On most single-track trails in our region, it is very difficult or almost impossible to reach 20mph while ascending, even on an e-bike. The trail surfaces are too curvy and have obstacles that limit a rider’s ability to pedal consistently enough to reach such

speeds. On descents, riders are rarely pedaling, so they are essentially riding a bike no different than any other modern mountain bike. We are aware that there remains a variety of uses and issues outside the scope of the Proposal, but AMPL submits that these new challenges and usages should be addressed strategically in the long-term working from a successful base of management rather than attempting to resolve all issues at once. We would recommend the Proposal focus on establishing success on the ground in the first years of implementation and then be periodically reviewed to address expansion into other planning areas or expanding classes of use in some areas.

The Bridger-Teton NF, in partnership with several citizens and local non-profits are proposing an expansion of EMTB access on trails around Jackson, WY. Currently, EMTBs are only allowed on 3 trails in the Jackson region: Munger Mountain, Crankshaft (Mosquito Creek), and Horsetail. The trails on Munger Mountain and Horsetail have restricted access dates, from July 1- September 9th. While this access for EMTB is appreciated, this opportunity is simply insufficient to support current demand for these type of riding opportunities. AMPL is concerned that without expanded legal access for this type of usage, EMTB users will be forced to seek their own opportunities. It has been our experience that this situation results in low quality recreational experiences and resource impacts. This is less than optimal. This Proposal would also lengthen the dates where EMTBs are allowed on those trails. AMPL submits that this expanded access would greatly improve recreational access with minimal to no impact to resources and this improved access would further many goals and objectives for the USFS that have been identified in both recent Executive Orders and Strategic Trail Planning efforts from the USFS.

1. Who we are.

Advocates for Multiple Use of Public Lands (“AMPL”) is an organization made up of passionate recreationists, which was formed in 2017. Our focus includes the organization of public support and the creation of a unified voice to maintain and protect broad access to our public lands for motorized and well as non-motorized recreational uses in a cooperative and cohabitant manner. We believe in the coexistence of recreation and conservation for all. For more than a year, AMPL has been an active participant in the EMTB Coalition efforts that have provided the foundation for this Proposal. It has been our experience, both with the EMTB Coalition efforts and outside these efforts, the use of EMTB has often provoked immediate public responses to their use. Often these positions are taken quickly and not well informed and that these concerns are mitigated or entirely

removed once people are educated on what is and is not an EMTB. AMPL hopes that a successful trail building effort on the BTNF would lead to lower conflicts between diverse user groups in other areas of the forest as well.

2(a). Class 1 EMTBs have no greater impact on trail surfaces than traditional mountain bikes and often the public is unable to even distinguish Class 1 from traditional bicycle.

Prior to addressing more localized concerns and issues around the Proposal, AMPL believes it is critical to recognize the somewhat complex, fairly confusing, and often controversial landscape level history around the use of e-bikes on public lands for recreational purposes. We are aware that some of the confusion and conflict around e-bikes has resulted from regulations and Executive Orders that are badly out of date at this point. These management models do not reflect the current levels of technology available or the fact that many of these modes of transportation were largely relegated to use in works of science fiction rather than valid management concerns to be addressed in planning when these management models were developed. Given this history of conflict and confusion of the public around the use of e-bikes nationally, we anticipate similar concerns and conflicts to be present around the Proposal as well. AMPL firmly believes that reducing confusion and complexity of discussions will significantly reduce conflict around the Proposal and any subsequent implementation of the decision. Understanding how the public does or does not even perceive Class 1 e-bikes when compared to a traditional bicycle is critical to this proposal. If the public cannot identify the differences, we doubt there will be conflict between the uses.

One of the major points of confusion and complexity is around the designation of e-bikes as motor vehicles for management purposes, which has resulted from the inflexibility of various regulations on the issue. While AMPL does not assert that e-bikes are non-motorized or mechanized vehicles, we are also aware that e-bikes and traditional motorized vehicles are two fundamentally different vehicles and uses, despite all vehicles being identified as motorized. Recognizing the fundamental difference in the traditional moto vehicle and e-bikes is critical to our support for the recommended direction of the Proposal. We are also aware that much of the research that has been performed in the implementation, both on and off federal public lands has not focused on recreational usage of e-bikes on natural surface trails but has focused on the use of an e-bike for transportation purposes rather than recreational purposes. AMPL is aware of groundbreaking

research on the ability of the public to even differentiate class 1 e-bikes from traditional bicycles that was performed by Jefferson County Colorado in their development of e-bike management plans for their recreational use on county lands. A complete copy of the results of the yearlong effort is attached to these comments as Exhibit "1". Again, if the public is unable to differentiate between the two bicycles, any concern around conflict between these users lacks a factual basis.

The Jefferson County research is wide ranging in the issues it tackles and the detail with which it addressed the recreational usage of e-bikes. The Jefferson County research conclusions are stark and highly relevant to the Proposal. While the Jefferson County efforts are highly relevant to recreational usage of e-bikes on natural surface trails, awareness of this research is also highly limited. The Jefferson County effort was highly credible in its process and really sought to obtain accurate information from the public regarding the usage of e-bikes. Generally, Jefferson County Rangers started by briefly interviewing members of the public in areas where e-bikes were being already used for recreation. After this preliminary interviews, members of the public were then provided the opportunity to ride an e-bike and some basic information about the e-bike.

Jefferson County researchers identified that prior to the brief educational effort almost 75% of people interviewed could not differentiate a Class 1 e-bike from a traditional bicycle when asked. While they could not differentiate the two types of bicycles, the public held opinions about what they were and were not. After education and an opportunity to ride an e-bike, acceptance of the class 1 e-bikes significantly increased. The significant impact of even the brief educational opportunity provided by the Rangers is reflected in the significant decline in opposition recorded. Prior to this education, public concern was voiced about e-bike use by 41% of those contacted. After education and the opportunity to ride a Class 1 e-bike, those concerned about e-bike usage fell to 23%.

Conclusions such as this simply cannot be overlooked in the development of management plans for class 1 e-bikes as these conclusions are highly relevant to any concerns around possible conflict of users on the trail. 75% of the uneducated public were unable to even differentiate between a class 1 e-bike and mountain bike making any valid concern about their use difficult to support. This is simply an overwhelming portion of the recreating public. The Jefferson County findings that the public acceptance of e-bikes significantly increased after engagement and education of the public on these vehicles is also highly relevant as these managers can expect that conflict will continue to decline as use and awareness of e-bikes increases over time. The

development of projects such as the current Proposal would speed this type of acceptance, which AMPL submits would greatly factor into the rationale and support for the Proposal and its long-term success.

2(b) Certification Programs for Class 1 e-bikes will provide education opportunities and reduce possible conflicts for the Proposal.

The Proposal also provides for a first in the nation certification program for Class 1 e-bikes as Class 1 e-bikes before they can be used in the Proposal area. AMPL is aware that while the public ability to recognize a Class 1 e-bike is minimal but is also tied in some way to the class of the e-bike being identified. The public ability to recognize e-bikes increased as the speed and capability of the e-bike increases as these performance gains are obtained by development of a product that looks less like a bicycle. These more powerful classes of e-bikes also can create more resource impacts and user conflict because of their higher speeds and capability. While there could be long term opportunities to allow other classes of e-bikes in the future, AMPL believes that phased implementation on issues such as this should be adopted as the discussions around other classes of e-bikes being allowed in certain areas will be very different once there is a baseline of public support around the use of Class-1 e-bikes.

The Proposal provides a process to ensure that only class-1 e-bikes are allowed in the planning area through the certification process outlined in the Proposal. This requirement is critical to our support as the implementation of a sticker system to ensure ONLY class 1 EMTBs are being used on our trail systems. Local bike shops or other trained experts should be the ones to issue these stickers upon an in-person inspection of an EMTB. While the Proposal is silent on if this is a one-time certification of the Class 1 bicycle or an annual certification, AMPL vigorously submitted this should be an annual process and be modeled on existing OHV sticker programs requirements for annual renewals of registrations. AMPL is aware that often vehicles change over time, due to modifications and subsequent technology changes and an annual certification of e-bike class avoids these challenges. The annual recertification of these units avoids possible evolution of classes of ebikes to a level of capability that might begin impacting public support for the usage in the Proposed areas. Requiring an annual certification for e-bikes also creates a point of contact between businesses, land managers and recreational users. This point of contact would provide an important educational opportunity for both current and new e-bike users regarding the restrictions.

3. The goals and objectives of several Executive Orders are advanced as the Proposal improves recreational access and related economic contributions to local communities.

As previously noted in these comments, there is a shortage of quality single track trails in the planning area that allow the use of any EMTB. The limited access to public lands for recreational activities in all forms has sought to be addressed with new Executive Orders issued by the Biden Administration. AMPL would like to address these EO with some level of detail, as we expect these documents to be addressed by those that may oppose the Proposal. A full and complete review of these EO provides significant support for the Proposal as recreational access and economic contributions are improved. The Proposal also provides for the use of bicycles and EMTB in a managed and sustainable manner, and these managed opportunities have a long history of protecting resources as the public will use these provided trail opportunities rather than seeking out their own experiences when opportunities are not provided. Often these self-guided recreational experiences result in far less sustainability due to unintended resource impacts.

The first Executive Order we would like to address is EO14008, as often this EO is only addressed as the source of the 30x30 concept. AMPL will not address the 30x30 concept with any detail in the planning area given the areas proximity to Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks and several large Wilderness areas such as the Gros Ventre and Jedediah Smith Wilderness areas. The acreage of protected areas only expands when planners include the more than 1.4 million acres of roadless area designated on the BTFNF. Given these exceptionally large highly protected areas, compliance with the 30x30 requirement has been achieved. EO 14008 specifically addresses the requirement of expanding recreational access and economic benefits five different times in the EO as well as creating the 30x30 concept. It has been our experience that awareness of these requirements is limited at best. §214 of EO 14008 clearly mandates improved recreational access to public lands through management as follows:

“It is the policy of my Administration to put a new generation of Americans to work conserving our public lands and waters. The Federal Government must protect America’s natural treasures, increase reforestation, **improve access to recreation**, and increase resilience to wildfires and storms, while creating well-

paying union jobs for more Americans, including more opportunities for women and people of color in occupations where they are underrepresented.”

The clear and concise mandate of EO 14008 to improve recreational access to public lands is again repeated in §215 of the EO as follows:

“The initiative shall aim to conserve and restore public lands and waters, bolster community resilience, increase reforestation, increase carbon sequestration in the agricultural sector, protect biodiversity, **improve access to recreation**, and address the changing climate.”

§217 of EO 14008 also clearly requires improvement of economic contributions from recreation on public lands as follows:

“Plugging leaks in oil and gas wells and reclaiming abandoned mine land can create well-paying union jobs in coal, oil, and gas communities while restoring natural assets, **revitalizing recreation economies**, and curbing methane emissions.”

While EO 14008 does not define what “protected” means, EO 14008 does provide clear and extensive guidance on other values to be balanced with. From our perspective the fact that large tracts of land are Congressionally designated or managed pursuant to Executive Orders or other administrative designation far exceeds any goals for the EO. As these EO clearly require expanding recreational access and economic contributions these requirements are only more relevant in the planning area as compliance with any 30x30 requirements has been achieved.

President Biden has also issued other Executive Orders that require expanded recreational access to public lands, and it has been our experience that public understanding of this document is also limited and often incorrect. EO 14072 specifically recognizes and protects recreational usages as follows:

“**Section 1. Policy.** Strengthening America’s forests, which are home to cherished expanses of mature and old-growth forests on Federal lands, is critical to the health, prosperity, and resilience of our communities.... We go to these special

places to hike, camp, hunt, fish, and engage in recreation that revitalizes our souls and connects us to history and nature. Many local economies thrive because of these outdoor and forest management activities, including in the sustainable forest product sector.”¹

President Biden’s EO 14072 specifically addresses recreational issues and opportunities as a factor to be addressed in the planning process as follows:

*“Sec. 2. Restoring and Conserving the Nation’s Forests, Including Mature and Old-Growth Forests. My Administration will manage forests on Federal lands, which include many mature and old-growth forests, to promote their continued health and resilience; retain and enhance carbon storage; conserve biodiversity; mitigate the risk of wildfires; enhance climate resilience; enable subsistence and cultural uses; provide outdoor recreational opportunities; and promote sustainable local economic development....”*²

President Biden’s EO 14072 continues to recognize the need to protect recreational access and related economic benefits as follows:

“(d) The Secretaries, in coordination with the heads of other agencies as appropriate, shall within 1 year of the date of this order: (iii) develop, in coordination with the Secretary of Commerce, with State, local, Tribal, and territorial governments, and with the private sector, nonprofit organizations, labor unions, and the scientific community, recommendations for community-led local and regional economic development opportunities to create and sustain jobs in the sustainable forest product sector, including innovative materials, and in outdoor recreation, while supporting healthy, sustainably managed forests in timber communities.”³

It is beyond contest that the Proposal significantly advances the goals and objectives outlined in these provisions of both Executive Orders and AMPL submits this alignment must not be

¹See, EO 14072 at §1

² See, EO 14072 at §2

³ See, Exec Order 14072; Vol. 87, No. 81 Federal Register 24852 (2022)

overlooked in an attempt to obtain compliance with other provisions that have been complied with for decades. The Proposal would be a major step towards satisfaction of the clearly and repeatedly identified goals of expanding recreational access and related economic contributions from recreational access and activity.

4. Various Executive Orders governing motorized vehicles are badly out of date.

AMPL is also aware of the ongoing and contentious history of management of e-bikes on federal lands. Years of USFS efforts have gone into the management of these vehicles. BLM Secretarial Orders have been issued and withdrawn after litigation and other threats. While this process has been long a difficult, many interests in the process have failed to recognize that traditional motorized vehicles and Class 1 e-bikes are fundamentally different despite the fact that they are both motor vehicles. Part of this management challenge results from the fact the Executive Orders governing what is and is not a motor vehicle are badly out of date and simply have never evolved to reflect the changing nature of recreation.

The horribly out of date nature of the Executive Orders that have created and driven all travel management requirements on federal lands is worthy of a brief discussion in these comments. A more detailed discussion on this issue is simply outside the scope of this Proposal. The horribly out of date nature of the management model for motorized vehicles is starkly evidenced by the fact that when President Richard Nixon issued EO 11644 in 1972 cutting edge technology was an electric toaster in the kitchen. There can be no factual argument that the country has evolved from this position in almost every way possible. The fact that there are challenges in applying a 50-year old decision to today's recreational activities should not be a surprise.

The most recent USFS planning efforts around motorized vehicle rules and management was completed in 2005. While this is far more recent than the original Nixon EO, these rules are out of date as well. This is exemplified by the fact that dial up internet was still relied on by many to access the internet when the 2005 USFS Travel Rule was finalized. Smart phones were largely unheard of when the rule was completed. These are processes that are simply universally recognized as out of date outside of the management of motor vehicles. AMPL submits that while these comparisons might seem slightly comical in nature, they also provide a stark example of why traditional management tools simply do not work well in addressing modern issues such as the use of class 1 e-bikes. The challenges from these requirements are also starkly in contrast to

the more numerous and far more recent Executive Orders outlined in these comments that recognize the need to expand recreational access and the extensive benefits from this activity on public lands. For this reason alone, the Proposal warrants support.

5. The Proposal furthers the goals and objectives of the USFS National Sustainable Trails strategy.

AMPL is aware that the USFS has been engaged in a multi-year national planning effort seeking to develop a sustainable trails strategy. These longer-term efforts have been recently expanded with the USFS additional effort to reimagine recreation. The Teton EMTB roundtable effort would be an amazing example of how the goals and objectives of these efforts can be applied on the ground. These efforts are also far more relevant than other planning requirements, such as EO 11644, which we have addressed in other portions of these comments.

The USFS Sustainable Trails Strategy provides the following strategic goals and objectives:

“Relevancy: Connect with diverse communities and trail users.

Challenge: Due to urbanization, changing demographics, obsession with screen time, as well as a growing demand for new trail opportunities and emerging uses, people are becoming increasingly disconnected from public lands and trails in many places.

Aspiration: Trails are widely valued, enjoyed, used to access public lands, and recognized for their benefits to society. Trail users and partners have a strong unified voice and reflect the demographics of the Nation.

Actions:

3.1 Identify and Communicate Benefits: Collaborate with public, tribal, and private partners—including academia and industry—to further identify and communicate the local and societal economic, health, and wellness benefits of trails and to encourage broader use and collective support.

3.2 Foster Cultural Relevance: Actively listen to and engage diverse communities, including the next generation of trail users, to foster trail opportunities and networks that are accessible and relevant to their interests.

3.3 Support Outdoor Recreation Economy: Work with local communities, partners, and industry to understand and leverage how trail systems can support rural and urban economic health and growth where appropriate and through strategically targeted investments.

3.4 Build upon Outreach and User Ethics Programs: Build upon successful outreach and user ethics programs, including work done by partners and foundations, to engage and motivate future stewards of public lands.

3.5 Expand Use of Service and Job Corps Programs: Expand integration of 21st Century Conservation Service Corps, Job Corps, and similar youth and veteran programs to increase the benefits of trail stewardship.”⁴

Again, AMPL submits that the goals and objectives of the Sustainable Trails Strategy are advanced with both the Proposal development, collaborative recommendation from the Group and the adaptive nature of the recommended course of implementation that will result from the project. The benefits of this alignment will improve recreational opportunities for EMTB usage in the short term, but we would hope will resolve other conflicts and build trust across user groups to address recreational access issues in other portions of the BTNF as well.

AMPL representatives also are aware the USFS has recently released their new initiative seeking to reimagine recreation. This effort is the most recent initiative that started with efforts around creating sustainable recreational framework for the USFS in 2010. The third bullet of this most recent effort is entitled “reinvent” and provides the following goals and objectives for reinventing USFS recreational sustainability which is described as follows:

creative ways to engage with others to steward recreation on our public lands to plan, design, adapt, and manage the recreation landscape into the future.

AMPL asserts the Proposal is a vigorous step towards achieving the goals identified in the reimagining recreation effort and many of the concepts, goals and objectives that have been highlighted over these efforts spanning more than a decade. The ability to successfully implement projects based on these goals and objectives will produce benefits well beyond this project area. The ability to work collaboratively and effectively in developing recreational opportunities will have

⁴ See, USFS Sustainable Trails Strategy pg. 8.

long term benefits across multiple user groups and areas. AMPL hopes this success will improve recreational opportunities, foster partnerships, and protect resources.

6. Voluntary class certification program must provide for an annual recertification.

As we have addressed in the previous portions of these comments, confusion of the public regarding the nature and characteristics of EMTB has proven to be a barrier to the expanded usage of these vehicles. The ability of the public to even obtain information on these issues has proven to be difficult. AMPL believes that the voluntary class certification program that is proposed is an important component of the effort and would be a significant step towards resolving this challenge in the planning area. One of the primary benefits from this voluntary class certification program is the fact this would create a point of contact outside the Forest Service for the public. There is a high level of value in this manager-to-public type of contact, when they are collaborative and educational in nature. We have found that the ability to engage the public from a user-to-user perspective rather than a manager-to-user to be a far more effective direction for education.⁵

Both types of communication and education are even more successful when they are done **before** the public is actively using a recreational opportunity. Rather than saying NO at the trailhead, the public can be educated as to why something they thought was ok to use in an area was not ok to use before they are at the trailhead. They are then able to resolve the issue and get to the trailhead and pursue their recreational activity without limitation. Sometimes this problem can be resolved by purchasing a piece of equipment at their local recreational supplier. The Proposal furthers both types of communication. A cornerstone of the voluntary class certification is this type of engagement with the public around the use of e-bikes. While this cornerstone may be easily overlooked it is critically important.

A second benefit of the voluntary certification program is this avoids confusion of the classes of e-bikes. The voluntary certification by local partner businesses will aid in compliance as people familiar with e-bikes will be certifying the class of e-bike rather than members of the public simply asserting they are complying. This should avoid significant confusion as most e-bikes of any class are poorly labeled if they are labeled at all regarding class designation of the particular e-bike.

⁵ This type of peer to peer messaging and education is exemplified by programs like Stay the Trail Colorado or Tread Lightly, both of which have long histories of demonstrated success with these tools.

Often even basic characteristics of the particular bicycle are not identified on the unit. Without labeling such as this and despite their best-efforts members of the public will not be able to identify the class of e-bike they have, and enforcement of any standards would be almost impossible. The specific identification of the class of a particular e-bike has proven to be a difficult challenge as many manufacturers of e-bikes have adopted a position that the class system is only rough guidance for usage rather than enforceable management standard. The certification of the particular class of bicycle that is being ridden by a person with background and education sufficient to avoid these types of challenges will be a major step towards success of the program. These are issues that can be far more effectively and collaboratively addressed in a bike shop during the certification process when compared to a land manager having to stop a user and address this issue during a recreational experience.

AMPL supports the voluntary certification process as outlined but believe one important clarification to the Proposal must be made on this issue, which is the life span of the voluntary certification must be clearly addressed. Currently the Proposal is silent on this issue, which would allow a certification to span the lifetime of the unit. AMPL submits that the lifespan of any voluntary certification must be limited to one year. While there are numerous implementation questions that result from the requirement of an annual recertification of a particular unit's classification, AMPL believes annual recertification is important. As previously noted e-bikes are easily modified to alter their class, and the requirement of an annual recertification removes the temptation to alter the unit after it has been certified to a particular class. It has been our experience that with the limited identification of a unit's characteristics, simply identifying what class a unit actually is can be difficult.

Not only does this annual certification remove possible good faith confusion of the public, it also provides a point of contact between the public and the local cycling community and businesses. These annual points of contact can provide important educational resources about local issues, such as washouts, temporary trail closures or other conditions that would be relevant for the public to have a quality recreational experience. This can be an important resource and this institutional contact can be very helpful. These contacts for local cycling communities can also drive economic contributions from the e-bike usage as the public will also be able to see the newest and greatest in gear, accessories and new e-bikes when they perform the annual certifications. This will result in equipment being purchased. Again, these are important benefits of the Proposal that should be recognized.

7. Implementation and monitoring plans.

AMPL strongly recommends development of an implementation and monitoring plan for this Proposal and submits that this Plan should be guided by the NEPA process but developed outside the formal processes of NEPA analysis. AMPL believes that sufficient flexibility should be provided in the NEPA process to allow subsequent monitoring and implementation to adapt to issues and new information without requiring additional NEPA. This may take the form of identifying triggers for expanding access into other areas, such as trailheads being at a particular capacity a certain percentage of the time would allow implementation of the next phase of the NEPA decision.

As an example, an implementation plan could allow for another trailhead to be developed with the approval of the USFS when the existing trailhead has been demonstrated to be 80% full for 4 days a week. An implementation plan could allow the opening of a new trail when a threshold of users is identified on a certain number of days on existing trails. Again this could be contingent on partners showing successful management of this network and only after written approval of the land manager. While AMPL is aware that the 2012 US Forest Service Planning Rule is not directly applicable to the Proposal, we cannot overlook the fact that this type of monitoring and implementation planning is required for forest plans under the 2012 Planning Rule⁶. We also understand that this type of monitoring has been effective on forests that have adopted this model. We believe this model could be properly scaled and applied to smaller scale projects such as the Proposal very effectively.

The EMTB working group would be a perfect partner on an issue like this, given the working group involvement in the development of the Proposal and the fact this group has a proven track record and recognized leadership position on this issue. AMPL is aware of numerous grassroots efforts that have successfully passed through the NEPA process and then failed to be implemented for a wide range of reasons. AMPL is aware that a failure of partnerships in this way can do long-term damage to the relationship between managers and partners. An implementation and monitoring plan will help avoid these failures by providing a long-term strategy and a clearly defined road map for management of the area moving forward.

⁶ See §219.12 of 2012 USFS Planning Rule

AMPL is also aware that even when projects are fully implemented monitoring plans are critical to the long-term success of the project. Good information leads to good decisions and long-term success. Monitoring plans can take many directions but development of high-quality information to make decisions must be a goal. In the Proposal, one of the cornerstones of the effort is the fact there is a lack of high quality EMTB trails in the area. Making these new routes available for EMTBs is going to impact the Proposal area and many areas outside the specific scope of the Proposal. Developing a quality monitoring plan will help understand where users are coming from and why they are choosing to use a particular area. This is always helpful information in the effective management of any area and addressing expansion of uses into other areas when capacities are reached.

The need for a quality monitoring and ability to adapt the Proposal to new information will be heightened by the fact that significant portions of the Proposal are unique, such as the voluntary class certification program. The highly unique nature of the certification proposal will draw a lot of interest. Monitoring of the program will be critical to understanding how changes in the voluntary certification program may have affected visitation. If shops adopted a more streamlined certification process, did this effect visitation to the trails? Monitoring information will be a critical component of these discussion and understanding these indirect impacts to recreational visitation to the area.

AMPL is aware that there are a wide range of monitoring and visitor counters that could be used, such as trail counters or game cameras or volunteers engaging with riders at the trailhead. While these tools are reasonably well understood and easily implemented, there remains concerns about accuracy of information and costs of obtaining the information. We do not believe a lengthy discussion of these issues is warranted with the Proposal. AMPL would like to raise a new planning and monitoring tool that is being piloted in several locations around the country, which is the use of cellphone-based data in the planning and monitoring process for trail projects. This has revolutionized land management in several areas it has been used. The State of Washington used cell phone data to manage State Parks and Wildlife areas more effectively. We are aware of new efforts in Northern Colorado that are developing cellphone-based data to provide real time planning information and the amount of information that is available is astonishing. The following is a link to the preliminary released data from this effort.

[Workbook: NoCo 2050 Dashboard \(tableau.com\)](#)

Development of this type of information is in its infancy as a management tool mostly due to high costs for this type of information being the historical barrier. These costs are steadily dropping and we would expect this cost to continue to drop over the life of this project. While this data is not cheap, it is becoming more reasonable every day. Even with the increased availability of this data, a large amount of analysis must be done to bring the data into the desired or usable format. This probably means involvement of a partner to obtain funding and assist with data development and presentation. These are issues that a monitoring and implementation plan can help guide and facilitate. AMPL believes the NEPA effort should provide guidance on this type of implementation and monitoring plan and allow sufficient flexibility to adapt the proposal to new information that could be developed as a result of this plan.

The value of a quality monitoring plan and adaptive management model for the Proposal could be immense. Currently, there are only 3 single-track trails open to EMTBs on the Jackson District and the season dates on 2 of the trails are too restrictive. A quality monitoring plan would provide specific number of visitors and help manager understand trends that come from management changes. Allowing EMTBs on Teton Pass will alleviate vehicular traffic on Teton Pass and parking congestion at popular trailheads on the Pass. Developing a good understanding of how fast these assumptions are experienced and the accuracy of the basic assumption will be critical in the success of this Proposal. Again, this assumption for the Proposal would greatly improve with high quality monitoring data and facilitate successful management in other areas of the BTNF.

8. Site Specific concerns.

AMPL is providing site specific input regarding several issues to highlight the large of amount of coordination and development that has gone into the development of the Proposal from the Teton EMTB community.

- a. Old Pass Road is a perfect artery for EMTBs to access trails starting from both the top and mid-way up Teton Pass. It's wide, paved, and can accommodate the additional use. AMPL suggests signage for both uphill and downhill traffic reminding users to stay on the right side of the path and to ride at reasonable, safe speeds. While we are aware there could be concern on this component of the Proposal in the scoping efforts, the underlying reasoning for the decision cannot be overlooked either.

- b. The trails on the north side of Teton Pass will provide EMTB riders who aren't looking for the more extreme, jump trail, downhill experience with trails to ride. Trails such as Arrow, Snotel, Phillips Ridge, Phillips Canyon, etc. are what make this proposal more inclusive. The jump trails on Teton Pass will always be catered to younger users willing to take more risk. The north side trails will offer traditional, cross-country riding options that will be better suited to a variety of users. AMPL believes that the wide range of recreational opportunities provided for all types of EMTB users is important and managers should not overlook this diversity of opportunity across the landscape.
- c. Extending the season dates on Munger Mountain and Horsetail would allow EMTBs to access these trails for more months out of the year. These dates were set for motorized vehicles due to noise pollution conflicting with hunting seasons. EMTBs are virtually silent and should be allowed on these trails during the same dates mountain bikes are allowed.
- d. While we support the expanded access provided from the Proposal during hunting seasons, we are also aware that other areas have seen increased off trail usage of e-bikes during hunting seasons. AMPL submits that the Proposal must clearly and directly address this issue by confirming that the Proposal does not allow off trail usage regardless of why it is occurring. Again, this is an issue where a high-quality monitoring plan would be valuable in understanding if this is a concern. If this issue was found to be an issue, it could be effectively addressed with educational materials and outreach. The Proposal should recognize these benefits to the hunting and non-hunting communities and work to avoid any conflict between these groups.
- e. Greater Yellowstone Hike/Bike Path- AMPL has participated in extensive discussions around the development of a hiking and bike path that would ring Yellowstone NP.⁷ Many local communities have already begun development of portions of the Path or have worked to consistently manage existing routes that have been incorporated into the greater loop. Many of these communities have already allowed the use of e-bikes on the Greater Yellowstone Path and AMPL submits that consistent management standards for e-bikes around the entirety of the loop will be critical to success of the effort. Without consistency a poor recreational opportunity and this would be a serious barrier to the success of the Project. The Proposal should provide flexibility to accommodate a trail network that is consistent around Yellowstone NP for all uses.

⁷ [The Trail — Yellowstone Shortline Trail](#)

9. Conclusion.

AMPL proudly supports the Proposal as we have spent significant time in collaboratively developing the Proposal prior to it coming to the USFS for NEPA analysis. AMPL welcomes this opportunity to provide input on the development process used in the collaboration and more detail around why our recommendation was made. AMPL would recommend refinements and clarifications for the Proposal to address issues around the administration of the Proposal and to avoid future conflicts and challenges that may result from conflicting standards in subsequent proposals. AMPL recognizes the sport of E-mountain biking is growing and that these users have extremely limited access to their public lands. E-mountain bikers are seeking a traditional, single-track riding experience with the aid of a pedal assist motor. This allows riders to travel further and makes the sport of mountain biking more inclusive, providing those with physical disabilities or limitations a means to access single-track trails. This Proposal would greatly benefit these users while having little to no impact on other more traditional mechanized users.

If you have questions or would like to discuss these concerns in more detail, please feel free to contact Will Mook, AMPL's Executive Director. Mr. Mook's phone is 307-214-8126 and his email is willm@teamAMPL.org.

Respectfully Submitted,



Will Mook
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