Dear Bridger-Teton National Forest,

I am a passionate individual who advocates for eMountain Bikes (eMTB) use and I am writing this letter in support of the current proposition to expand recreational opportunities for eMTBs on select single track trails of Bridger-Teton National Forest, thus, decreasing the regulatory burden of eMTBs. In the following letter I will be referring specifically to **Class 1, non-throttled eMTBs.** I do not advocate for any eBike classes other than Class 1. With respect to mountain biking specifically, no mountain bike brand is known to be developing Class 2 or Class 3 eMTBs. The eMTB industry is aligned with this approach.

eMTBs are well received in Europe and elsewhere, however when they were first introduced to the United States market there was a major oversight that the industry did not account for at the time and that was the process of naturalization. Part of the problem was also because it was a new industry with very low market penetration, so the general public was not even aware of the differences in technology. There was also not a lot of education done at any federal level on what an eMTB actually is. People thought that eMTBs were lightweight dirt bikes with powerful electric motors. Because they are equipped with pedal-assist mid-drive motors, people clung to the word MOTOR and out of ineptitude, tossed these bicycles in with ATVs, dirt bikes, and other high powered, high torque, and loud machines. Little has changed today. As a consequence, we have a set of unnecessary roadblocks and barriers that to this day impede the adoption of eMTBs.

Modern day eMTBs are light years beyond what they were just 10 years ago. An eMTB is very similar to a regular bicycle, which is equipped with a mid-drive unit that engages exclusively via pedaling. The mid-drive is cleverly wrapped around the bottom bracket with both cranks directly mounted on each side. The pedal assist works through torque sensing which only comes into play when the rider is pedaling. The amount of boost that the assist is capable of is proportional to the torque provided by the rider. Pedaling your eMTB is not optional; pedaling your eMTB is mandatory. You must pedal your eMTB in order to initiate the motion. The system works on the principle that when torque is passed through the mid-drive, it engages the electric circuit for the duration of pedaling, and that's how additional mechanical energy is obtained. Mid-drives are designed such that when you press on the pedals, they amplify the amount of power that you are pressing with. In other words; eMTBs are designed to boost your pedal strokes, they are not designed to replace pedaling. Class 1 eMTBs possess NO throttle which means they are unable to self-propell. According to the Federal Trade Commision, all eMTBs fall under one category in the United States; "**Pedelecs".** They ride, handle, pedal, and act like regular mountain bikes with little to no difference. Pedelecs are legally classed as bicycles in the United States rather than low-powered motorcycles or mopeds. Contrary to the popular opinion, they are not much faster than mountain bikes and moreover they are not even close to the destructive machines that many picture them as.

Personally, I consider myself to be an open-minded individual and will gladly engage in a conversation with anyone who has anything to say. In fact, I often encourage people to speak out. I believe the quieter we are on these types of subjects the more open to interpretation others become. If we don't have the wherewithal to meet each other with what is reality, then all we do is retreat to our little corners of incomplete information and further contribute towards it being metastasized. Lack of proper communication often creates an informational vacuum and when there is a vacuum, someone is certainly going to fill it with whatever they see fit. This is exactly what happens today between riders who ride mountain bikes and riders who ride eMTBs and why we still have a group of people who are

vehemently against this beautiful conveyance. Simple misinformation that is so ingrained into the mentality of those who despise eMTBs that they fail to see reason. Half of them assume that eMTBs have a throttle, a dozen horsepower and do 45mph+ like a dirt bike. They couldn't be further from the truth. I always make a counterpoint that Class 1 eMTBs are incapable of self-propelling, moreover reaching anything close to those speeds. I also stress that this is the class of eBikes that all advocacy groups are fighting for equal trail usage on, not the ones with throttles. There is this philosophical argument which is largely based on the prejudice that anyone with pedal assist is cheating. -Cheating at what? -Cheating at having fun? -Are we competing? I've also heard numerous times people shouting to me "You know that doesn't count, right?" -Who's counting? -Towards what the count is? I look at all the beautiful country around me and ask myself "-None of this counts? -Do I really get to experience this exclusively by wearing myself to shreds? -Since when the desire to soothe the strain of an ascend is considered immoral?" With the help of the pedal-assist my favorite rides are becoming significantly less stressful on my knees and the climbs are not taking the fun out of the greatest reward that mountain biking has to offer. Why can't it be that eMTBs are for everyone who wants to have a good time out on the trails?

While we're at it, it's worth addressing the elephant in the room. It is true that Class 1 eMTBs are leaning towards the heavier side. My eMTB for example is exactly 52 pounds, which is about 16 pounds heavier than my regular mountain bike. In most cases, I ride my eMTB more conservative than my mountain bike. With greater weight comes greater downside. That downside is maneuverability. eMTBs are less nimble in that regard, which is a constant reminder and a key indication to me that handling in technical terrain and tight corners requires extra caution. This situation involving exposure to potential danger is a factor that each and everyone has to assess before heading out. Remember, practice always beats theory. Theory is nothing when you have no experience beforehand. The more you practice your riding skills the better you get at taming your eMTBeast. Your body adapts and naturally stays in synergy with the bike. I encourage everyone who is in strong opposition to Class 1 eMTBs to try one yourself (your friends don't have to know about that). I promise you, your interpretation of what you think you know it is, is far from being accurate when you have no accurate data to work with. The concept of eMTBs is easily misinterpreted when you let your prejudice fill in the missing pieces. The more you familiarize yourself with it, the more you realize it's rather similar than different from a regular mountain bike. Class 1 is not capable of self-propelling, there is physically no button you can press or any grips to twist in order to engage the mid-drive and unleash all your mighty 3/4 of a horsepower. eMTBs are exclusively operated with your legs, in an identical fashion as your mountain bike. The moment you stop spinning the cranks, so does the mid-drive. The mid-drive is there to add additional pressing power on top of what you initially provide. Only the fact that you are initially required to pedal your eMTB in order to activate the pedal-assist makes it fundamentally different from a motorized vehicle.

The argument that "Oh, it's still a motor!" is irrelevant here. Bicycle style eBikes are not motorized vehicles, even though they have pedal-assist mid-drive motors. As of August 29, 2019 all bicycle style eBikes are federally exempt from the definition of motorized vehicle (Thank You Secretary Order 3376). The Forest Service is the last federal agency in the United States to categorize bicycle style eBikes as motorized vehicles. eMTBs are not motorized vehicles, at least not in the sense that many associate them with. There is a reason why all bicycle style eBikes are also exempt from the motor vehicle financial responsibility, driver license and license plate requirements by the Department of Motor Vehicles of the United States. It is clearly stated in its **W.S. 31-5-707**, sections **(a)**, that "**An electric bicycle shall not be a motor vehicle**". Why does the Forest Service get to come up with their own terminology

for what things are when there already is a piece of legislation clearly defining that? Forestry's own Travel Management Rule states that a Motor Vehicle is defined as any vehicle which is **self-propelled**. Following that logic, the restriction that we currently have in place is exclusively applicable to Class 2 eBikes, as this is the only class that is capable of self propelling. Why is there still an argument about that, I cannot fathom. All of this predicament that National Forest got itself into could have been avoided had they not prematurely labeled all bicycle style eBikes as motorized machinery. Although the recently updated Travel Management Plan was somewhat a positive revision, it was nearly not enough to compensate for the loss of over 7 years of riding. It was nationally expected for eMTBs to be granted the same privilege as mountain bikes, given the magnitude of positive feedback from international advocacy groups and other agencies. Apparently positive feedback is not enough today, what else could have been needed?

eMTB Batteries

I do not take this part lightly. I feel uncomfortable adding this piece, because it involves some criticism towards the howlers who are screaming trigger words and going in full swing pitchfork and torches, while providing no factual information in support of their statements. I'm sorry, this is a long overdue conversation that needs to be had, regardless of how uncomfortable each one of us feel about it. Each time I read public comments I'm basically entering a preloaded minefield of common misconceptions that do not align with reality and I need to address them before they gain any momentum.

As mentioned by people in the reading room, New York has an ebike fire problem. What they forgot to add to their inflammatory claims is the fact that none of these cases are eMTB related and did not happen near forests. There is a reason why all the ebike fires that make sensationalized headlines are city specific ebikes. This is a city specific problem, where people are known for cutting corners to save up on money, ignore safety precautions and build their own throttle assisted ebikes using cheap, low quality and uncertified batteries imported from Asian markets that lack dedicated battery management circuits. It is also crucial to acknowledge that all of those incidents happened while batteries were charging, not when batteries were in use. In the eMTB industry, to this day, both United States and European markets, there hasn't been a single incident where a battery would ignite a forest. This success rate is largely attributed to years of safety feature development and extensive tests to meet and exceed initial requirements. To put some numbers in perspective, my eMTB battery alone is more expensive than those ebikes catching fire in New York. As a consumer, I am well aware that eMTB batteries may not cost that much to design and assemble, but that is the price I pay for a product that is certified to be free from significant risk.

As much as I would like that to not be true, there is always risk associated with lithium ion batteries. Just as much risk as having a cell phone in your backpack while hiking or backpacking. I do not want to be dismissive of risk, a battery catching fire would undeniably have major consequences in eMTB accessibility. However, that risk is drastically exaggerated. Chances of anything bad happening from modern day eMTB batteries are over a hundred times less likely than chances of something bad happening from lower tier battery packs, such as those commonly found in certified Class 2 eBikes. Those numbers are already ridiculously low as is, a hundred times less likely than something already ridiculously unlikely. Battery manufacturers for the eMTB market are held to a much higher safety and

security standard than other classes, primarily because of their intended use in an environment where fire hazard is a substantial risk for everyone involved. No eMTB brand would risk staining their name and reputation if it wasn't for such a high level of commitment towards product safety.

In accordance with the UN regulations, all eMTB batteries must comply with the UN Model Regulations and Manual of Test and Criteria. Lithium-Ion battery designs undergo extensive tests such as: Altitude Simulation, Thermal Test, Vibration, Shock, External Short Circuit, Impact / Crush, Overcharge and Forced Discharge. The Federal Trade Commision then requires these documents to be presented before greenlighting the import process and sales of eMTBs in the United States. All eMTB batteries are CE certified, which means products have undergone rigorous testing by the UN against nationally recognized safety and sustainability standards and have been certified to be free from significant risk, be that fire or electric shock.

Another level of safety and security is the onboard battery management circuit, which is essentially an intelligent fuse built into the battery where if something was to cause trouble, it would immediately trigger the over current protection to mitigate any risks associated with rising temperatures above a safe threshold. That battery management circuit is also responsible for the health of the battery. It does so by evenly distributing current to each cell to be charged at the same rate, balancing and limiting the maximum voltage that a battery cell can reach. Same rationale is applicable when the battery is in use, the onboard battery management circuit ensures that the same level of power is drawn from each individual cell. If there were any anomalies to be had, the onboard battery management circuit would detect that variance in performance, assess the risk, and decide whether or not it's safe to continue charging or discharging the battery, virtually eliminating the risk of thermal runaway. Sophisticated features like this are absent from those ebike batteries catching fire in New York, the exact reason for which they are prone to failure.

Speaking of battery cells. There are 3 major companies in the lithium-ion cell industry that eMTB manufacturers use to build batteries for their products. Those companies are Samsung, Panasonic and LG, all of which have solid reputations in their respective market segments. Each of these entities adheres to manufacturing protocols to ensure quality before battery cells are shipped in bulk to battery pack manufacturers. Here is where better news is coming in; As technology advances, new battery cells such as lithium ferrophosphate are more and more often used in the eMTBs batteries today. The most important advantage that lithium ferrophosphate has over other lithium-ion chemistry is thermal and chemical stability, which dramatically improves battery safety. This is an improvement over the safety level that is already high as is. Reason for which, all of the new eMTBs on the market will be exclusively equipped with this even safer technology. If all of the above is not an indication of commitment towards an elevated level of safety and security, I'm afraid you may be very misinformed. I'm sorry.

Local Media

This subject goes shoulder to shoulder with the previous part as I can't stress enough the importance of not using trigger words. Should this proposition pass, it is going to be a black eye for the eMTB community and land managers if the title of the press release and contents are not worded accurately. Local media outlets will certainly report on this story so it's crucial that they properly cover it. Most

people do not read articles today, they only read headlines and glance over the first associated image. It only takes a second to subconsciously link headlines and images together and start visualizing mayhem. Here is a perfect example of that:

Can we live with electric mountain bikes on trails? | jhnewsandguide.com

Intentionally or not, Jackson Hole News & Guide picked the worst possible image to accompany the title of that article. The problem is that the image displays Class 2 Cargo eBikes, which are not suitable in any shape or form for single track trails and were never a subject of interest in any eMTB advocacy groups. Aside from the fact that they've made a few good points, the image description fails to clarify to the general public who may not be aware that there's so much more to the specifics, why was that image chosen to accompany the article. Given that most of the Jackson Hole News & Guide audience does not have a subscription to read articles in full, you can see how easy it is to misinterpret the message of an article, without reading a single word of text. Those who read headlines and jump to conclusions are less likely to change their minds even if they are presented with accurate information that counters their pre-existing prejudice.

Side observation: The mere fact that people are still under the impression that this proposition is about allowing the same eBikes that the town of Jackson is having trouble with, is proof that most of them downright ignore the details and choose to run with the title, along with their mouths. Had they read the supporting documents for this proposition, they would have known that this project proposes to allow access to the only class of eBikes that is similar in performance and behavior to the type of bikes that are already allowed to ride on trails. Had they read the supporting documents of this proposition, they would have understood that the climate of users who are seeking true single track experience using their eMTBs is not the same user base that the town of Jackson is experiencing difficulties with. Not reading a single word of text and going in with the headline makes people assume matters rather than understanding them. This unfortunately is also applicable to people writing those articles for media outlets.

With that being said, if this proposition passes, it would be best for everyone if words such as "E-BIKE" were omitted from the press release or used as few times as possible. Instead, the wording should be focused solely on "Class 1, non-throttled, and eMountain Bikes (eMTBs)". It is not a secret that when advocating for eMTB use I often try to refrain from using the word "e-bike". Reason for that is because the word "e-bike" is primarily used as a generic term to refer to a broad spectrum of devices that people directly associate with, the most common of which is motorcycles, a type of motor vehicle that has very different regulatory requirements than those for eMTBs. Whereas using terms such as "eMountain Bike" or "Pedal-Assist" is more about disassociating from the stigma of bicycle style eBikes that often winds up being perceived as motorized machinery. I have noticed in the past that while trying to create reasonable discourse with people about eMTBs, they tend to cling on one little snippet of information they can use to reinforce their preexisting biases and I lose their attention in a roll of an eye. I am not diminishing anyone for not knowing things I do, I understand that there is a layer of complexity here. It is okay to display signs of healthy skepticism whenever someone is pitching you their ideas. People will listen to what you have to say for about 30 seconds and at that point they'll subconsciously either choose

to lean in or hold back. When we already believe the world to be a certain way, then we interpret new experiences to fit with those beliefs whether they actually do or not. You don't even think further once you already believe it is true and consistent with your past experiences.

Cache and Game Creek

While I support the idea of starting slow with this proposition, I disagree with one aspect of it: The decision not to include the Greater Snow King area. Many of us expected it to be the highlight of this proposition, unfortunately it wasn't even acknowledged. I have downloaded the attached project documents and during the study I could not find any indication as to why was Greater Snow King area excluded from this proposition. I am inclined to assume the decision was made solely on the premise that the area is in very high demand. Consequently, there is concern that adding eMTBs into the mix would push that number even higher.

That might not be entirely accurate. With this proposition potentially passing, mountain bikers who are already using the trails systems may be inclined to transition to eMTBs due to a number of factors. As technology improves, eMTBs become lighter and have longer battery life. This makes them more appealing to riders who were previously deterred by the weight and limited range of earlier models. Many locals also work 9 to 5 jobs in the town of Jackson and at the end of that working day an eMTB equipped with pedal assistance can make a big difference to people who might struggle to catch up with the remaining daylight, a factor that would otherwise discourage people from getting out. Naturally, the number of recreationalist is expected to grow as this sport will inevitably bring new people in the long run. However, it won't happen overnight. Until then, the number of bikes on trails, be that regular or eMTBs, is expected to remain more or less the same. Growth is inevitable, therefore it needs to be met with the same energy. Compelled by their expanded possibilities, riders might be incentivised to get out more often, cover longer distances, explore more trails and ride for a more extended period. Best solution is dilution here. Just a few years ago the Trail Project was concluded and we haven't heard anything from Bridger-Teton National Forest in regards to that development. Perhaps this project could also be revised along with the Forest Plan Revision. As someone who wants to be a member of this community, I'd be more than happy to contribute my time and resources to help and build new trails.

The Greater Snow King area is not a competitive setting but rather a recreational one. Since trails are often shared, each trail user, be it a hiker, biker, or equestrian is expected to encounter other participants at any given time. Needless to say that common courtesy not to endanger self and the safety of others should be everyone's priority. This is an essential quality that is inherent to respectful human beings. Hate to break it to you all this way but as an eMTB rider I also have that sense of common courtesy, much like the majority of others participating in outdoor activities. Douchebaggery is not a quality that comes with the purchase of an eMTB, I've checked my receipt. I am not a spiteful hooligans with no interest in anything other than vulgar display of displeasure and desire to ruin your precious trails. While I can't invalidate people's past experiences, I find it mind boggling that they choose to weaponize their frustration to justify keeping eMTBs banned from the forest while willfully ignoring the fact that thousands of others do not behave like that. There are bad eggs that give any sport a bad name. Privileged trail users can be just as irresponsible and disrespectful. Just as there are more responsible and respectful bikers than irresponsible ones. It is beyond important to acknowledge that

and call out the bad actors who spew discredit head on. Let's not fall for what appears to be a blazing attack, most of them have nothing but blanks. In the end, the determination of whether eMTBs are "predators that rob you of dignity" is a matter of personal judgment and individual interpretation, which is not what regulations need to be based on. One should not restrict access based on people's interpretations fueled by their immediate emotional responses, but rather approach it with a calm and collected mind and face the facts that are based on direct evidence and science, which I am sure is already the driving force behind this proposition.

Along with all of the above, mountain bikes are already allowed on single track trails regardless of their specification, size and weight. I am sure we all understand that trail erosion is primarily caused by riders overusing their brakes on downhill sections, either due to excessive speed before turns and obstacles or by riders riding in inappropriate, muddy conditions. eMTBs and mountain bikes have identical impacts on trails in that regard, given that both use identical resources such as gravity, brakes and one contact point on each tire tread. Literally, identical! In every shape and form. When it comes to prebuilts, there is more overlap than there is variance by a substantial amount. eMTBs share DNA with mountain bikes, where manufacturers use identical components to spec their products. Rider attitude is the key factor in trail wear, not rider's conveyance. In light of which, I believe all trails that are currently open for mountain bikes should be also open to eMTBs. If a regular mountain bike has access to a trail, then an eMTB should have as well. It is up to individuals to understand and accept accountability and responsibility for their actions, exactly the way Forestry suggests; "You are responsible for your own safety". A good example here would be the Lithium Trail on the Teton Pass. I have ridden that trail multiple times on my mountain bike and admittedly it's at the edge of my comfort zone. It is doable, however riding my eMTB on that trail would definitely benefit from a few prayers, which is why I would rather choose not to ride it even if I were legally allowed. I am also not a competitive rider, but rather a recreationist, hence speed is a factor that greatly affects my line choices. Lithium is one of those trails where diehard downhill riders keep their speed very high and honestly I would not feel comfortable holding everyone up. In the Cache/Game Creek area, on the other hand, trails tend to be more lenient with hints of flow. Borrowing from the concept of flow, trails offer an opportunity for individuals to immerse themselves fully in the present moment. Embracing the flow implies adapting to the environment and fellow travelers seamlessly. My face would light up in happiness if I could hop on my eMTB and experience that joy. Beyond the significant health benefits of the activity itself, it's also an elevated adventure that drives you happily insane!

Alternatively

Am I the only one who envisions this as being a matter of "when" instead of "if"? If the answer is YES, may I suggest a more pragmatic approach? I suggest applying for Environmental Assessment for both areas at the same time and then strategically withhold access to the Greater Snow King Area until enough feedback is collected from Phillips Canyon and Jackson Hole Mountain Resort for further decision making. I may not be the greatest geologist but something tells me that topography in Phillips Canyon is very much the same when compared to the Greater Snow King Area. Why invest precious time and resources into a similar process later down the line and potentially waste even more years of joy, when you can do both at the same time? Isn't nearly 8 years of loss already enough?

A good starting point after EA could be allowing eMTBs to access the less popular trails, which also happen to be located at a higher elevation, the area where eMTBs would have no problem getting to and would stay out of others' way. Skyline, Wilson Canyon, Game Creek and Beaver Ponds. Said trails are significantly less crowded when compared to daily usage of Cache Creek. Not only eMTB riders could benefit from that, it could also help with lifting the stress off of the trails at lower elevations, while simultaneously offering a fair compromise to eMTB riders until they are morally accepted by the community and not be greeted with a basket of gray depression.

If disrupting tranquility is considered as a reason for not expanding in the Greater Snow King area, perhaps hikers should be banned from talking to each other. If fear of trail degradation is a factor that's still considered as a reason not to expand, perhaps there should be a user weight restriction and a public scale at each entrance. I'm sorry, I shouldn't have said that. In all seriousness, if trail degradation is still considered as a reason not to expand, perhaps an optional donation for the Trail Division that maintains those trails could be accepted. If rider reputation and credibility is a factor that is still considered as a reason not to expand, perhaps an invitation to the main office could help with rectifying that. Those who show up and still wish to ride their eMTBs in the Greater Snow King areas could only be granted access if they agree with stricter terms and conditions that Forestry may impose. Be open up front with what are the main concerns and why would an elevated credibility tier be required for that area. Trust is a luxury and not everybody can afford one, therefore it will be necessary to take safety precautions such as inspecting their conveyance of choice. The bike would need to be made sure it is a Class 1, non throttled eMTB, with the pedal assist mechanism installed in the middle of the bike that is wrapped around the bottom bracket, the pedals of which are attached directly to the mid drive, one on each side. Then, an authorization sticker or a card that would validate qualifications could be provided, which could go perfectly with the optional donation for the Trail Division. Would Friends of Pathways be interested in providing a card like that?

Jackson Hole Mountain Resort Feedback

As of July 2022, Class 1 eMTBs are allowed on designated cross country bike and multi-use trails on Jackson Hole Mountain Resort. Class 1 E-bikes are allowed on Sweetwater and Teewinot lifts and allowed for downhill use anywhere in the bike park for ticketed riders. I am one of those who has been riding those trails every weekend in the 2022 and 2023 Summer Seasons and I have not had any issue or confrontations with anyone out there. I was actually surprised to see so many people in support of them. Even the Patrol is using this beautiful conveyance to quickly navigate through the bike park and I am glad that current management is displaying signs of rational thinking and is permitting this beautiful conveyance to play a big role as a fun outlet for exercise and rescue missions.

The mere fact that Jackson Hole Mountain Resort is allowing eMTBs on all trails might be the strongest argument against there being conflicts caused by their presence, although some may suggest it is because those trails are mountain bike specific and that I completely forgot to factor in the absence of hikers and equestrians. You may be right, however, I am not using that fact to dismiss the argument. I am using it to show that it has real effects. People are less likely to throw unsolicited and provocative remarks in your face when they see that an entity with high authority levels is at the forefront of accessibility. Even if their motivation is deeply rooted in a desire for monetary gain, the idea that one

should not or cannot stand for something simply because it just so happens to benefit himself at the same time, is ridiculous. Just because someone stands for something that is good for them, doesn't mean it cannot be good for the rest of society around them.

In any case, I am sure Jackson Hole Mountain Resort keeps a track record of their experience regarding eMTBs usage on the trails. Given that Jackson Hole Mountain Resort is leasing the land from Bridger-Teton National Forest, I don't see why they would not share that wealth of knowledge with you. Valuable feedback and insight are worth gold today.

Conflict Mitigation

Benjamin Franklin was wrong when he said: "In this world nothing can be said to be certain, except Death and Taxes". He certainly forgot to say "and Trail Conflicts". When differences clash, they often lead to conflicts, especially if individuals are intolerant of diversity. When people perceive a situation as unfair or unjust, they are more likely to become involved in conflicts to rectify what they see as being wrong. Competition over limited territory is also a leading cause of conflicts. When resources are scarce, people or groups may start a fight over who deserves access the most. Fear of the unknown or mistrust of others also leads to conflicts. Confrontations are a natural part of human interaction whenever they feel threatened. Everyone has prejudice in their lives and in the way they view things and I am by no means immune from that. As modern day people, it is our ethical obligation to identify these traits in us and work on taming them. Many conflicts escalate because parties involved do not have problem solving abilities to effectively mitigate those conflicts. The inability to contain our most immediate emotions is perhaps our weakest weakness. This is where apprenticeship is needed.

Embracing the age-old principle of treating others as one wishes to be treated, trail users can navigate their journeys with reverence for the experiences of others. If we desire respect for our chosen paths, we must extend the same courtesy to our fellow recreationists. In the pursuit of a harmonious trail experience, virtues such as patience, tolerance, and kindness must become our guiding stars. By embodying these virtues, we can transform conflicts into opportunities for mutual understanding and personal growth. Continuous self improvement is key to amicably resolving conflicts. Promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion in outdoor spaces is essential for fostering a sense of belonging and ensuring that everyone can enjoy the realm of the outdoors.

Trails, as shared spaces, necessitate a social contract wherein users agree to abide by certain rules and norms. This implicit agreement forms the foundation of peaceful coexistence. Upholding this contract is not just a legal obligation but a moral one that would hopefully mitigate some of the polarization that we feel today.

Do we need enforcement?

Yes! When there is no enforcement, members of the public will put themselves in charge of policing and take matters in their own hands. Self appointed authority often knows no boundaries and has tendencies that bring out the worst aspects of their personality, such as getting ego boosts from kicking out and holding down individuals they do not relate to. Given that aspect, verbal abuse can escalate to physical violence if spirits are not contained. As a result, property damage as a form of punishment for

not complying with demands may happen. While the latter would be the worst case scenario, regardless of who would be identified as the aggressor or the victim, efforts need to be made to prevent and address such offenses and misconducts. It's important to note that conflicts may not always be negative. Constructive conflicts, paired with conflict resolution skills can lead to positive changes and outcomes, provided they are managed and resolved effectively. Responsible trail use following such conflicts can be as effective as strict enforcement in the long run.

I think updated signage would also help dissect the unwanted classes from trail usage. I suggest that the restriction sign that currently says "**NO** E-BIKES, **NO** PEDAL ASSIST" be revised to say "**NO** E-BIKES, **YES** PEDAL ASSIST", with a possible QR code that would lead to a web page (hosted by Friends of Pathways, perhaps?), providing exact definitions for each term, explaining the main difference between those two and the rationale behind why one was chosen over the other. A dedicated post with eBike apprenticeship, along with a friendly reminder of trail etiquette would also be a great addition.

For Teton Pass; I'll be honest with you, I do not know. It is anticipated that only those who know what constitutes a Class 1 eMTB and have experience riding them to be out on the trails, as this is the only bike that is suited to absorb the roughness of the trails. Rear hub ebikes (Class 2) are suited for paved roads rather than true off-road technical terrain. They are good for general riding but greatly limited in off-road potential, particularly on steeper terrain where they struggle to provide assistance. Same rationale is applicable for Class 3 ebikes. This class is mainly adopted by road bikes and gravel bikes. They have thinner wheels and absolutely no suspension to absorb the bumps. Teton Pass is known for its roughness and given the absence of active suspension on these bikes, I very much doubt someone would want to ride Class 2 or Class 3 ebikes in that area. Although, as developments of the pathway from Victor to Jackson continue, some form of exemption or permit may be needed in the future for those who wish to commute using Class 2 or Class 3 ebikes on the paved section of the Old Pass Road.

In conclusion

Throughout the history of social advancement and growth, there has always been backlash from groups of people who completely rejected and vilified everything that wasn't in line with their personal standards and traditional values. Today, similar groups are attempting to convince Bridger-Teton National Forest that individuals like me are a threat to the intricate balance between humanity and nature. In their eyes, armed with technology, we intend to disrupt that intricate balance, fostering a sense of hostility and disharmony. In contemplating those bold notions, I hope you arrive at the realization that eMTB technology, in its essence, is not a threat to nature, but rather a manifestation of humanity's innate curiosity and desire to discover the world. In embracing that realization, I hope you will transcend the role of intermediary and become a force for regeneration and renewal.

I would also like to conclude this letter by saying this: When it comes to common courtesy, responsible and respectful eMTB riders outnumber the irresponsible ones. Actions of the few should not restrict access for all.

Thank you for your time everyone,

Sincerely,

-Vadim Ian