

E-MTB myths vs. facts

There are several myths circulating respecting electric mountain bikes (e-MTBs) that are worth clarifying:

Myth: E-MTBs speed downhill on singletrack faster than non-assisted “analog” mountain bikes.

Fact: E-MTBs are heavier, less nimble, therefore not inherently faster downhill where more braking than pedaling is required.

Myth: E-MTBs destroy trails more than analog mountain bikes.

Fact: E-MTBs tend to have wider tires which disperse pressure per square foot.

Myth: It is a reasonable accommodation that e-MTB riders be restricted to riding paved bike paths and trails open to other motorized vehicles such as motorcycles and jeeps.

Fact: E-MTB riders want to ride with their friends on the trails they love; it is not a reasonable accommodation to take this option away. Many of the trails open to motorized vehicles are steeper, deeply rutted from tire slippage or poor drainage, and loud and smelly from exhaust.

Myth: All e-MTBs are the same.

Fact: Class 1 e-MTB electric motors only operate when the rider is pedaling; it is a very natural assist of normal riding. Class 2 (throttle control) and class 3 (faster speeds) are generally not encouraged or permitted on natural single track trail surfaces.

Myth: E-MTB riders and hikers clash.

Fact: Clashing is a function of maturity, not the means of propulsion. E-MTB riders are no less likely to stop and yield for other mountain bike riders, pedestrians, and equestrians than analog mountain bike riders.

Myth: E-MTB riders don’t deserve to ride the same trails as analog mountain bike riders because they didn’t “earn” it.

Fact: E-MTB riders regularly participate in trail building and maintenance with land managers, partly because many are retired and have the time. Categorically excluding e-MTBs, especially where analog mountain bikes are already permitted, does not seem justified.