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Organization:

Title:

Comments: I live in Sundance Wyoming, adjacent to the Bearlodge District of the Black Hills National Forest. Our trail system is top notch, offering fantastic views of beautiful canyons and mountains, but is largely inaccessible to persons other than extreme athletes and horseback riders. You must gain 1000 ft from the trailheads over the course of 2+ miles in order to get to the breathtaking views and high ground. While highly experienced athletes of all regards can do this, average national recreators cannot.

I will take my commentary time to debunk some common arguments against Class 1 E bikes:

1. Additional user conflicts will arise because E bikes can close uphill distance faster than regular bikes

1. Answer: On this Forest, regular mountain bikers regularly shuttle to the top of the mountain and ride down it.

They often go in excess of 30 MPH coming down the trails. We rely on their judgement to avoid conflict between slower moving user groups and themselves. I really don't see a difference between users going uphill vs downhill for speed management and controlling their method of transportation, horseback or other. We depend on people to maintain control over their property at all times, and Class 1 e bikes are no faster than regular mountain bikes, in fact they are slower, just more pleasant.

2. Equestrian users cannot hear e bikes coming, and they can come slightly faster and quietly, so they shouldn't be allowed

2. Answer- Equestrian users wear down trail systems and affect hikers and bikers more than any other group.

When a group of 15 horseback riders goes down the trail, they often tell people to get as far off the trail as possible and they tear up areas with 1000lb+ beasts faster than even ATVs. They have no business complaining about sharing the trail with anybody. While I agree they have the right to enjoy non motorized trails, I think that their right provides an excellent comparison. Encountering a group of 15 horses can be terrifying to other groups in tight areas of trail, where cliffs may be on both sides and you have to be exposed to an unpredictable animal that could kick, bite, or run you over and kill you. Riding a 40 lb bike that is limited to slower than a regular mountain bike, it's easy and predictable to maintain control over yourself and your impact to other users.

3. Land managers can't control E bike traffic. How are they supposed to differentiate between class 1, 2, and 3 e bikes and enforce regulations? They shouldn't be allowed because they are similar in nature and we will end up with basically electric dirt bikes on trails.

3. Answer- 95% of people follow the posted rules and regulations. The 5% people who don't are already out there using trails on their dirt bikes and all classes of E bike. We make regulations to control the majority of traffic and issue warnings/citations for those who don't. Getting a listed class 1 e bike and seeing it has no throttle, a 250W motor output limit, and a 20 mph limitation is not at all unfeasible.

4. Batteries are dangerous and could explode and cause fire. E bikes need to be outlawed because of their fire risk

4. Answer: It is the visitors responsibility to control their fire risk at all times. You must control your own open fires, your trailer chains, where you park so your exhaust doesn't light the grass on fire from your vehicle. There is no difference in controlling the negligible risk of battery overheat, whether in your cell phone or your e bike.

5. E bikes cause more trail damage because they apply more pressure to the ground

5. Answer: While class 2 and 3 e bikes apply more ground pressure, I agree, they should not be on non motorized trails. Class 1 e bikes do not apply more pressure to the ground than standard mountain bikes. Standard mountain bikes and E bikes have a negligible comparison for wear and tear on the trails, especially in cases where people shuttle bikes to the top of the mountain and fly down.

6. Only handicapped people should be able to get an e bike permit so they can enjoy the same elements fully abled persons can

6. answer: I agree, class 1 e bikes really help young, old, and disabled people to fully experience non motorized trail systems and maintain a lifelong connection to public land. I think that is where they shine, and possibly the most important argument to allow e bikes onto non motorized trails. I don't think those people should have to disclose their personal health information to get a permit to experience this enjoyment.

7. E bikes promote aggressive riding styles that are more dangerous

7. Answer- E bikes are not a cause of aggressive riding. People charge down trails on regular bikes, and that argument is the same one as the popular concept that guns promote shootings. There are wild people who get guns and shoot people. There are wild riders who get shuttled to the top of mountains on non motorized bikes and bomb down 35mph. The aggressive style is already there, E bikes don't change it or make it more prevalent.

8. These batteries allow people to get to places that are remote and then run out of battery

8. Answer- E bikes can be easily pedaled without power. Yes they are a little heavier, but class 1 styles are not heavier than 60 lbs. It is the visitors responsibility to know their limitations whether hiking, horseback riding, or biking. If you hike in 20 miles and can't get out, its the same as riding in 40 miles and having to slog out. If your horse dies in 20 miles, you figure it out. This is another example of how legislation shouldn't govern or override visitor responsibility, the same as fire management.

9. E bikes allow hunters to get further into non-motorized areas and hunt animals that should be reserved for folks who want to hike in miles.

9. Answer: If folks hike in miles and shoot an elk, why should they have to cart it out miles? The meat will spoil by the time they make 15 trips out, resulting in a wasted game animal. Allowing hunters access to the game they paid to be allowed to hunt should be the priority. Compare 2 hunts of walking vs e biking, and you will find that a class 1 e bike can pull far more animal back more quickly and safely. I have yet to meet a hunter that doesn't think it would be really cool to go by E bike, if they have any sense whatsoever, they won't shoot an animal they can't retrieve in a couple of hours, so there really isn't a user conflict there.

10. It is an unfair chase to use an ebike to quietly access locations where hunting game lives

10. Answer- Class 1 e bikes are so similar to mountain bikes that you would have to outlaw approaching game using mountain bikes to sustain this argument.

11. E bikes should just stay on ATV/UTV trails and roads

11. Answer- ATV/UTV trails are a pleasant place to ride an e bike, regular bike, horse, or dirt bike, however they aren't that fast. ATV's often operate at very high speeds legally on ATV trails. Mountain bikers and E bikers alike tend to want to avoid these trails because the quiet nature of these categories doesn't alert loud ATVs to their presence. While they should be allowed on motorized trails, and are in many places, they shouldn't be confined to areas they feel unsafe, especially roads where a truck and 5th wheel camper could cream them and not even notice the impact. Many riders, especially beginners, should avoid roads and areas where fast moving traffic is a hazard.

In summary of my big debunking common arguments, E bikes bring families together. Mom can take the kids and ride together to beautiful places without harming other visitors or natural resources.

Class one is a key specification, that I would like to see 250w max power output added to. Class 2 and 3 get to a slippery slope that could make electric dirt bikes an allowable element on non motorized trails, but a 250 watt max pedal assist bike is just a pleasant visitor experience that expands the audience that can experience public lands. Everyone who seems to argue extensively against them seems to have no real experience riding them, or is someone who wants to resist change at all cost.

Opening to Class 1 e bikes will connect people to public land in a new way that will garner a stronger future of trail and public land advocacy.