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Organization:

Title:

Comments: To whom it may concern:

My husband and I are in our early 70's and 80's. Having ridden mountain bike trails for many years, we are thrilled to be able to continue to do so with the help of class 1 pedal-assist e-bikes. We strongly support the proposed rule change related to allowing class 1 e-bike use where non-motorized bicycle (regular bike) use is allowed on US Forest Service trails.

No-one has yet been able to explain to me why my riding an e-bike on a mountain bike trail is going to spoil anyone else's enjoyment thereof. But I would like to address some of the negative views of e-bikes below.

Speed:

One complaint against e-bikes is that they go too fast. A class 1 e-Bike is limited to 20mph which is less than what can be achieved on a regular bike. On uphill trails the pedal assist function does allow weaker riders to go faster than they could unassisted, but strong riders on non-assisted bikes still pass we older e-bike riders on a regular basis. All trail riders, whether assisted or not, should be able and willing to accommodate other users of the trails by pulling over to allow faster riders to pass when appropriate.

Weight:

Another complaint by those who oppose e-bike is that the extra weight of the bike will make more wear and tear on the trail.

Modern e-Bikes have a weight in the 45 pound range, not much heavier than regular bikes. Given the wide range of rider weight there is no significant total weight difference, including bike and rider, between e-Bikes and regular bikes. Given the typical use of wide tires for e-Bikes and a weight that is approaching that of regular bikes, the pressure impact on the ground is no worse from e-Bikes. In fact 10 years ago, regular bikes on 26" rims and 1.9" wide tires caused more trail erosion than today's e-Bikes with 27.5" rims and 2.5" wide tires.

Safety:

It has been argued that e-Bike riders might get lost in the back country since they are able to go longer distance due to their pedaling support. This seems to be hardly a valid argument as even motorbikes that rely entirely on motorized propulsion seem to be able to return safely on a regular basis. Surely e-Bikes with assisted support will not result in a relative uptick in backcountry emergencies.

Crowded trails and rights of use:

The idea that e-Bikes would lead to more people on Forest Service land, crowding out trails, appears un-justified. Forest Service land as a public entity benefits from taxes and, therefore its use should benefit all tax payers and not only those on regular bikes. e-Bikes are often used by older athletes to extend their active life. We have paid taxes for decades and should be able to participate at the recreational opportunities our funds have helped to establish. Lastly, Forest Service lands seem to be vast and appears to have plenty of space to offer for tax payers' enjoyment.

In summary, reclassifying class 1 e-Bikes such that they will be authorized just like regular mechanical bikes for use on Forest Service trails has been overdue to keep up with recent technical advancements, the huge increase in popularity of e-bike use, and the need for public access for the benefit of all tax payers.

Thank you.