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First name: David

Last name: Hatcher

Organization:

Title:

Comments: I've been a wilderness hiker and mountain biker for more decades than I care to say, but I will admit that I loathe e-bikes. The jerks that ride them on my local trails go much too fast and rarely give other users a heads-up.

E-bikes are motorcycles, not bicycles, so I want e-bikes to be treated as motor vehicles, not bicycles. Because new e-bikes are being developed that will drive up to a crazy 55 mph, they must travel only where motor vehicles are allowed.

To allow e-bikes on trails, regardless of the speeds they can reach, is just asking for trouble. Because of their speed and low noise, e-bikes can travel much farther into the backcountry, and startle and disturb wildlife over far greater distances. E-bikes also conflict with other nonmotorized trail users, such as hikers, horseback riders and muscle-powered bicyclists.

Because there is almost no enforcement now for trespassing, illegal off-trail riding and illegal trail development by some mountain bikers, e-bikers will no doubt increasingly trespass into wilderness areas and other protected areas with no consequences. This illegal use will degrade the wild character of these lands and should not be encouraged, as this rule will do. I can imagine plenty of angry face-to-face encounters between e-bikers and other user groups.

Are you planning to allow e-bikers on winter trails? There already are plenty of conflicts between regular mountain bikers who use ski- and snowshoe-only trails in the national forest west of Boulder, Colorado. I suspect that e-bikers will only aggravate an already tense situation.

I've noticed that e-bikers tend to be older folks. (I say that as a post-65 retiree.) What kind of demands will be placed on already overworked search-and-rescue groups that have to help grandpa or grandma who thought they could handle a rugged and remote trail? E-bikers say they like the machines because their health doesn't permit them to ride a regular bike. So, these are the kind of trail users that you want to encourage?

This proposed rule suggests likely environmental impacts that should be fully evaluated through an environmental impact statement under the National Environmental Policy Act. If the Forest Service doesn't undertake an EIS, you can expect plenty of lawsuits.

The proposed rule also appears to set up conflicts with the Forest Service's own Travel Management Rule (36 CFR 212 et seq). More grounds for a lawsuit, I say.

Save yourself a lot of grief and withdraw this proposal. It's a really bad idea.