

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 10/22/2020 12:47:45 AM

First name: James

Last name: Bily

Organization:

Title:

Comments: I am an avid hiker, putting me on trails on public lands on average 6 times a week. I am a trail steward for Zion National Park, Red Cliffs Desert Reserve, Snow Canyon State Park and Vermilion Cliffs National Monument. I am also a volunteer at the BLM / USFS Interagency Info Center in St. George, UT. I care deeply about our public trails and want them preserved and available for future generations.

In recent years, I have noted increased use of e-bikes on our trails. There are many trails that are suitable for e-bike use but not in wilderness or other back-country areas. I have seen trails seriously impacted by bike use with side trails established, increased erosion, trails widened. Hikers and horse riders face dangerous situations when bikers come speeding by. E-bikes are capable of even greater speeds and so present increased threat. I oppose the Forest Service's proposed rule to open up my National Forest lands to additional e-bike use for the following reasons:

E-bikes must continue to be treated as motor vehicles, not bicycles. New e-bikes are being developed now that will drive up to 55 mph. E-bikes must travel only where motor vehicles are allowed.

This proposed rule suggests likely environmental impacts that should be fully evaluated through an environmental impact statement (EIS) under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

The proposed rule appears to set up conflicts with the Forest Service's Travel Management Rule (36 CFR 212 et seq).

Because of their speed and quiet nature, 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 like hikers, horseback riders, and bicyclists.

Because there is almost no enforcement now for trespass, illegal off-trail riding, and illegal trail development by some bikers, e-bikes will increasingly trespass into Wilderness 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. The Forest Service should withdraw this proposal.