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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Thank you for the opportunity for public comment on FSM 7700 and 7710, which would revise Forest Service directives to update and clarify guidance on management of electric bicycle (e-bike) use on National Forest System lands.

I own a class 1 electric mountain bike (eMTB). I am 62 years old and in pretty good shape. My e-bike is designed to operate at different levels of motorized assist and has a speed governor that limits my top speed. The e-bike allows me to bike longer and with less stress on my arms and hands than my regular bikes. I find that I can ride trails for hours on my e-bike, whereas on a regular bike my hands go numb while my arms and legs take up stress of hill climbs. In short, the eMTB allows me the freedom and pleasure of trail riding that would otherwise be difficult, and this gets me out into the woods. In northeastern Minnesota we are fortunate to have great bike trails on public lands, including USFS land, and I would like to have access to these trails. I emphasize that I do not ride any faster than others on the trail, and I do not ride dangerously for other riders or people on foot. The purpose of the e-bike is to assist my ride, not to race along the trails. My bike is quiet and as unobstructed as any non-electric bike. A class 1 eMTB in my view should not be considered a 'motorized vehicle' for trail use.

Please allow public discussion of e-bikes on trails on public lands. I support allowance of class 1 e-bikes on these public trails.

As background, I am a member of my local chapter of the IMBA. The mountain bike community is responsible for a large part of the natural surface trail infrastructure that exists today on our federal, state and local public lands. We manage many volunteers who work closely with local land managers on trail development, trail maintenance, and trail education for all users. Much of this work relies on funding sources specific to non-motorized trail projects.

The proposed directives could jeopardize this funding and increase user conflict if non-motorized trails were to become reclassified as motorized to allow for eMTBs. Instead, the final directive must reconsider how to allow class 1 eMTBs on select non-motorized trails while retaining a trail's non-motorized status, similar to the recent Department of Interior final rule. The final directive can be further improved by following the International Mountain Bicycling Association's management recommendations: managing the three classes of e-bikes separately from one another, and prohibiting class 2 and class 3 eMTBs on natural surface, non-motorized trails.

As highlighted in the anecdote above, mountain bikers like me appreciate the leap in technology presented by eMTBs yet recognize they are a unique management challenge. It is critical that land managers and local mountain bikers work together to determine where eMTBs are and are not appropriate on current and future mountain bike trails.

Thank you for the willingness to engage with the mountain bike community.

Sincerely,

John Goodge

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