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First name: John

Last name: Ellem

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Gentleperson:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on FSM 7700 and 7710 relating to updating directives as to how e-bikes are managed on national forest trails. I have had a class 1 e-mountain bike for a little over a year now. Like many e-bike riders my electric assist bike enables me to access trails and mountain bike along with friends and family members. I am new to the sport of mountain biking and am 53 years old and heavy set. Without the pedal assistance I don't believe this sport would be accessible to me. I would be limited to riding on roads or rail trails at best. The e-bike only provides me with that extra assistance when needed - I still get a great workout while enjoying the absolutely beautiful forested areas we are blessed with here in my home state of West Virginia. I know that e-bikes afford others like me or who may have other limiting health conditions such as bad knees, the same opportunities.

Until recently, I was limited in riding my e-bike in selected areas including the privately owned Snowshoe area in Pocahontas County, WV. However, effective this past June, West Virginia law was changed to allow class 1 e-bikes access to the same areas as regular mountain bikes. That bill is SB 660 and it can be read at this link:

https://www.wvlegislature.gov/Bill_Text_HTML/2020_SESSIONS/RS/signed_bills/senate/SB660%20SUB1%20ENR_signed.pdf

In particular I would call your attention to WV Code Section 17C-11-8(g)(1) which states:

(g) Electric bicycles operated on public roadways, public bicycle paths, public multiuse paths, and other public rights-of-way where bicycles are permitted to travel are subject to the following restrictions:

(1) A Class 1 electric bicycle may be used in places where bicycles are permitted to travel, including, but not limited to, public roadways, public bicycle paths, public multiuse trails, and public single-use trails.

With this measure, and others by our Governor and the Dept. of Natural Resources, West Virginia is taking the lead to expand tourism in the state and to further showcase its great natural beauty.

I support the 3-tier class used to define e-bikes and urge you to allow class 1 bikes to have the same access to trails as traditional bikes without e-pedal assist. Getting more people enjoying the great outdoors (and hence contributing to local businesses) should be a goal of government at all levels. Thank you.

John N. Ellem