

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 10/24/2020 9:59:59 PM

First name: Jim

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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Thank you for the opportunity to 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 have been an avid mountain biker for over 25 years, having ridden on USFS trails in 15 western states, primarily in my home state of California. I appreciate the access that your organization has provided both to the cycling community and the public at large. For 24 of those 25 years, I was a staunch supporter of traditional mountain bikes, dismissing the very concept of ebikes. Until two cancer surgeries affected my lungs and threatened to take away the sport that I loved. Purchasing an ebike a year ago allowed me to continue to enjoy my local trails, but I no longer have access to the trails I loved so much - all on USFS property.

For the past 6 years, I have volunteered in Big Bear, CA, with over 35 riders from my local ski patrol, to maintain a 4-mile stretch of trail in cooperation with USFS and the local Mountains Foundation. It would be very unfortunate to maintain trails I was unable to personally use to ride my bike.

Since I have significant trails experience as a rider and trail steward, I can say with the utmost confidence, that Class 1 ebikes have no adverse affect on our trails compared to traditional mountain bikes, on those trails where bikes are permitted. In fact, ebikes would offer many riders access to adventures they were previously excluded from for either health, disability or fitness reasons. I believe the ethos of the USFS is to be inclusive, not exclusive, when providing access to the taxpaying public. Embracing ebikes, like the Department of the Interior has done, would afford this opportunity to so many, and allow me to continue to enjoy the trails I labor on for all users, including USFS.

Thank you for the willingness to engage with the mountain bike community and your open-mindedness in this discussion.

Sincerely,

Jim Murphy
Southern California