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Organization:

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Comments: Thank you for the opportunity for the public to engage 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.

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. Hundreds of organized mountain bike clubs around the country manage thousands of volunteers who work closely with 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. I personally have been involved in multiple trail maintenance projects along side of other mountain bikers and scout troops alike to meet their service hour requirements which have also turned into great Eagle Scout projects as well. .

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 (which are pedal assist up to 20 mph) on 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. This classification is helpful due to the difference in speed and actuation of these Class 2 (pedal and or throttle assist up to 28 mph) and Class 3 (throttle assist up to 30 mph) eMTBs.

Mountain bikers appreciate the leap in technology presented by eMTBs and understand it is a unique management challenge as well. These proposed directives rightfully plan separate management for bicycles and electric bicycles. 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.

eMTBs open up a new adventure for many people who enjoy riding. From beginners that would not have considered mtn biking to health issues and or difficulty to do so. Along with couples riding together more often as well due to the ability to equal out the difficulty of a ride. I see many older couples out riding trails together now a days than I ever have in my 27 years of mountain biking. Then for the more advanced mtn biker you can go farther on trails and get to see more wilderness than ever possible previously due to time and ability. These adventures are usually done in small groups with friends and family members which helps build relationships and manage stress from everyday life. Not to mention the positive effects of an active life style as well.

Thank you for the willingness to engage with the mountain bike community. I hope this finds you all well and able to be successful for all parties in this venture.

Sincerely,

John W. Hill