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Comments:

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TO: The Dept. of Agriculture (Forest Service)

RE: FSM 7700 and 7710 E-bikes #ORMS-2619

I wholeheartedly support your proposed revisions to allow and even promote e-bike use on National Forest trails- THANK YOU! For starters, these much-needed changes will create consistency with over 27 states and the Dept. of Interior (BLM, USFWS, etc...) where e-bike policies have already been successfully updated. This will clear up widespread confusion for so many of us, and will also accomplish the much greater goal of "expanding recreational opportunities for many people, particularly the elderly and disabled, enabling them to enjoy the outdoors and associated health benefits".

I am one of those who will gratefully benefit from your lofty goal: Like so many other Americans, e-bikes have infinitely expanded my recreational opportunities. Let me explain:

Not even the very best female MTB rider in the world can keep up with the top male riders. As a fit 54-yr-old female hiker & biker who struggles (and fails) to keep up with my all-male friends & family on trails, I was thrilled when my husband surprised me with a Class 1 e-bike so that we could enjoy riding together. When we can find trails that I'm not banned from, it's been wonderful. I'm so grateful that you're considering eliminating outdated bans that are preventing thousands of women, and others (see below), from riding with the people they enjoy being with.

Also please note the 'protection' problem: for many women like myself, solo biking alone just isn't an option because it isn't safe enough (dangers from other humans, animals, accidents, etc). Many women never risk it- they ride with a male because it's safer on far-flung trails where help is too far away. But again, most women can't keep up with the men they ride with, unless they use Class 1 e-bikes, which have mistakenly been banned in the past. This is another reason I am grateful for your proposed changes.

Your proposed revisions will also allow me and my husband to see much more of America's beautiful lands: He is 65 years old, retired, and very fit; but as we age, it's becoming increasingly harder to hike for more than 12 miles in a day. ...And backpacking overnight is also becoming increasingly harder for us, the older we get. So longer trails are slowly fading out of reach. These mileage limitations are beginning to curtail how much of the outdoors we can see & enjoy. But with Class 1 e-bikes, we can easily do many miles of trails in a day: this will help keep trails accessible as we continue to age.

In addition to previously mentioned groups [(1) the aging; and (2) many women like myself], your proposal will enable many MORE groups to enjoy the great outdoors: for example: (3) the disabled; (4) children (who also often ride with much better bikers [like their parents] for protection as well as family enjoyment, and it's hard for children to keep up without some pedal-assist); and (5) basically ANYONE: For instance, there are plenty of males in their twenties to forties who are loving their brand new Class 1 e-bikes. They're increasingly popular, and whether it's a regular bike or a pedal-assist e-bike, studies have shown that we're ALL getting a great healthy workout: <https://www.newsweek.com/e-bikes-good-heart-health-study-1471604>

...Now to address some of the naysayers: Having seen some of the public comments submitted so far in your reading room, it felt like many were opposed simply because they selfishly want to keep trails to themselves, or their own "group" (like hikers, horses, traditional MTBers, extremist environmentalists, etc.), and do not want

others to have access to "their" beautiful lands. Other comments simply seemed uninformed about the difference between bikes and e-bikes (for ex: assuming they make noise, or create more damage, or go as fast as motorcycles) or their riders (for ex: assuming e-bikers are all out of shape, inexperienced, or reckless & rude). Nearly all in opposition seemed to be lacking in any ongoing encounters with e-bikes on multi-use trails. I wonder how many of those commenting have actually had consistent experiences sharing an existing legal mountainbike trail with both hikers, trail runners, horses, regular bikes, AND e-bikes? In my experience, having biked many multi-use trails in Arizona/Utah/Colorado, I would have to say that e-bikers are probably more polite, more cautious, and more environmentally aware than traditional bikers. I don't believe adding e-bikes to existing bike trails will worsen anyone's opinion of MTBers, and it might actually improve it. I hike far more than I bike, and am sharing trails with many different groups more than once a week, and we're all getting better with multi-use trails-- education and courtesy is improving each month.

In reality, on the trails I've hiked or biked throughout the Southwest, there is almost no practical difference between traditional bikes and Class 1 e-bikes. Class 1 e-bikes should absolutely be considered "non-motorized" by definition, as bikes are. ...So while you're in the process of updating definitions, please consider refining your definition of "motorized" and "non-motorized". Class 1 e-bikes are quiet, with no throttle, they require the rider to pedal, and have low 20 mph speed limitations (which is the slow speed used to protect small children from cars in most school zones). These bikes should definitely NOT be in the same class as motorcycles, ATVs, UTVs, Jeeps, and more: all of which are loud, with throttles, high speeds, and no pedaling. Class 1 e-bikes are ridden like traditional bikes, and should be managed like traditional bikes. In practice, they are not even remotely like any of the vehicles they are currently categorized with.

In closing, I am in full support of your proposed revisions and am grateful for much-needed changes which will allow "expanded recreational opportunities for many people". Also, please consider changing your definition of "motorized", as explained in the paragraph above. Thank you so much!