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First name: Kathleen

Last name: McCarthy

Organization:

Title:

Comments: I oppose the Forest Service's proposed rule to open up my National Forest lands to additional e-bike use for the following reasons:

E-bikes must continue to be treated as motor vehicles, not bicycles. New e-bikes are being developed now that will drive up to 55 mph . E-bikes must travel only where motor vehicles are allowed.

Because of their speed and quiet nature, e-bikes can travel much farther into the backcountry, and startle and disturb wildlife over far greater distances. E-bikes also conflict with other nonmotorized trail users like hikers, horseback riders, and bicyclists. As a standard bike rider in an area with e-bike use I can attest to the startling presence of these bikes. Even at 20 mph they are frightening when they silently zoom past one at speeds much greater than the average bike rider. One wrong move and I could be seriously hurt. If I am frightened, fauna will be more frightened.

Fauna in National Forests are very sensitive to disturbance. One frightened they will avoid the area, which limits their range for foraging for food and finding shelter and breeding places. Therefore, this proposed rule is likely to have environmental impacts that should be fully evaluated through an environmental impact statement (EIS) under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

The proposed rule appears to set up conflicts with the Forest Service's Travel Management Rule (36 CFR 212 et seq).

Because there is almost no enforcement now for trespass, illegal off-trail riding, and illegal trail development by some bikers, e-bikes will increasingly trespass into Wilderness and other protected areas with no consequences. This illegal use will degrade the wild character of these lands and should not be encouraged as this rule will do. As a project manager for a park with natural areas I can attest to the degradation of the land when illegal trails are developed. Erosion begins immediately and continues.

The Forest Service should withdraw this proposal.

Thank you for the care you are giving to this issue.