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Comments: I oppose the Forest Service's proposed rule to open up 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. I have personally observed how fast these E-bikes are capable of moving, even on relatively challenging trails, and they are a hazard to other recreational users, and well as any wildlife.

This proposed rule suggests likely environmental impacts that should be fully evaluated through an environmental impact statement (EIS) under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The public certainly deserves the right to comment on each phase of the proposed changes, and for each separate forest.

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

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. Overuse by recreationists is already heavily impacting wildlife, and E-bikes increase conflicts with large predators that surely will result in the unnecessary removal of those large predators. It also endangers hikers when large predators become more acclimated to these type of incursions on trails used by E-bikes, as well as wildlife and slower moving recreationists.

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. It is very concerning that the biking community is opposing protection of roadless areas that could potentially become wilderness in the future, as well as giving a wink and a nod to those who use wilderness and roadless trails illegally. I am currently seeing pressure on my own neighborhood wilderness and roadless areas in the Sandia Ranger District to increase trails available to mountain bikes to create a Perimeter trail around the Sandia Mountains. I am an active member of the Sandia Collaborative that is discussing this issue, and there are demands being made to alter wilderness boundaries to accommodate the perimeter trail, including decreasing the total wilderness acreage and a decrease in the proposed wilderness designated in the Tres Pisos canyon area. This is not acceptable on our public lands.

The Forest Service should withdraw this proposal.