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Organization:

Title:

Comments: My wife and I are both 70 years old, own class 2 e-bikes, and are in good physical shape. We enjoy riding on paved and improved-surface unpaved trails as a way of enjoying the outdoors while still being able to exercise. These trails are designated for hiking, biking and horseback riding. Many are rails-to-trails converted rail beds and offer many opportunities for bike touring using traditional or e-bikes. Washington State has devoted part of the Dept. of Natural Resources (DNR) budget toward improving these bike paths/trails to increase outdoor recreational opportunities for people of all ages and physical ability.

However, we also enjoy hiking on established trails maintained by the USFS, NPS, and Washington and Oregon State Parks. Occasionally we share hiking trails with mountain bikers, but these are trails where mountain bikes are allowed. We don't think it is appropriate, nor safe, to share hiking trails with eMTBs and e-bike riders for many reasons. It is not just for our safety but for our respect of the wildlife and the environment. Bike tires increase erosion and opening up hiking trails to e-bikes of any type will increase e-bike traffic and thus increase erosion. E-bikes, by design, are heavier than traditional mountain bikes and will cause more trail damage. E-bikers also go faster on the trails, providing more opportunities for conflicts with other hikers, bikers, horseback riders and wildlife. We need to remember that we are intruding into the natural habitat of wildlife and an increase in bicycle encounters cannot be good for wildlife of any kind: mammals (deer, elk, cougar, bear), rodents, reptiles or birds. For these reasons I believe it was both against the law, and inappropriate, for the US Secretary of the Interior to publish Order No. 3376, Increasing Recreational Opportunities through the use of Electric Bikes dated Aug 29, 2019. Let the public decide what is best for our public lands.