

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 10/27/2020 2:25:48 AM

First name: Jean

Last name: Naples

Organization:

Title:

Comments: I am writing as an American who strongly supports full protection for our National Forests and Wilderness Areas. At this time, I fully oppose the Forest Service's proposed rule to open up my National Forest lands to additional e-bike use.

Unfortunately, for far too long conservationists have ignored the threat that mountain biking poses to wildlands, wildlife, and Wilderness. It is very important to remember that research shows that all recreation vehicles including mountain bikes, displace wildlife, and because they travel farther and faster than hikers or equestrians, and they can impact a much greater area in the same amount of time. Because of their speed and quiet nature, e-bikes can travel much farther into the backcountry in less time, and their use startles and disturbs wildlife over far greater distances. The use of e-bikes along Wilderness trails also poses a direct conflict with nonmotorized trail users that includes hikers, horseback riders, and bicyclists.

I strongly urge the Forest Service to please continue to treat e-bikes as motor vehicles, because they are not bicycles. It is important to realize that new e-bikes are being developed now that will drive up to 55 mph. For this reason, the Forest Service must allow e-bikes to travel only where motor vehicles are allowed.

Please remember that this proposed rule suggests that any likely environmental impacts should be fully evaluated through an environmental impact statement (EIS) under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). It is important to realize that the proposed rule appears to set up conflicts with the Forest Service's Travel Management Rule (36 CFR 212 et seq).

As someone who very much supports full protection for our National Forests and Wilderness Areas, I am very disturbed by the fact that because there has been almost no enforcement 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. It is very important to acknowledge that this illegal use will result in degradation of the wild character of these lands and should not be encouraged as this rule will allow and encourages.

I thank you for your consideration of my letter and I strongly urge the Forest Service to completely withdraw this misguided proposal that does not mandate full protection for our National Forests and Wilderness Areas.

Sincerely,

Jean Marie Naples, MD-Ph.D.