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Organization:

Title:

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I'm writing to comment on "E-bike use on the Ozark-St. Francis and Ouachita National Forests Environmental Assessment" project.

I'm a 77-year older biker who has recently changed to an E-bike to better handle the hilly trails and bike lanes in the roads of Arkansas. I ride with the ABC bike club in Hot Springs Village Arkansas.

E-bikes are not motorcycles or motor scooters. While they can be ridden without peddling, I (and my E-biker friends) use the motor only to assist on hills too difficult to ride up using normal peddling required for flat trails. A common misconception about our E-bikes is that they are only motor scooters. Our E-bike motors do not kick in until a certain level of peddling occurs. That is, the rider must first apply a selected level of torque to the peddles before the motor assists the rider on any excess power needed to climb a hill. Therefore, we still get the benefits of a good ride similar to a flat road but can still ride up hills. I still want the exercise of a non-motorized bike, but as I got older, I simply needed assistance on the hills. Without the E-bike, I would need to dismount my non-motorized bike and push it up the hills.

My experience has shown me that E-bikes can safely and responsibly be ridden anywhere non-motorized bikes can go. E-bikes are not intended for acrobatics or jump competitions, but rather for safe basic riding to get from one point to another with more ease. They do not cause any more damage to the terrain or environment than non-motorized bikes, nor do they pollute the environment. My E-bike has allowed me to ride with my fellow ABC club members all over the state and enjoy our great outdoors.

I know this is a relatively new and somewhat controversial topic with some people concerned about negative impacts of "motorized bikes" on our trail systems within our national parks and other protected lands. I too want to be sure our wonderful public lands are not damaged in any way. But I also want to enjoy our natural resources and I truly believe that responsible E-bike users can safely travel on trail systems without doing damage to our environment, certainly no more than non-motorized bikes. Additionally, approving the use of E-bikes on this trail system will expand the opportunity for older people to bike through our protected lands.

Currently, only non-motorized traffic is permitted on many bike trails in Arkansas. I fully support the use of E-bikes on the Womble Trail on the Caddo-Womble and Mena-Oden Ranger Districts. I think with time, results from allowing E-bikes on the trail system can be used to open other trails to E-bikes.

Thank you for providing a mechanism for me to comment on this important project.

TMB