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First name: Paul

Last name: Diegel

Organization:

Title:

Comments: I'm writing to comment on the proposed changes to ebike access to trails in the Bridger-Teton National Forest.

I am an avid mountain biker and have been since the early 1980s. I'm retired, live part time in Teton County, ID, and ride, hike, ski, and climb in the BT a lot. I have an ebike that I use almost exclusively for commuting, errands, etc. I don't have any desire to ride it on single track trails but can see that potentially in my future as I age.

I believe strongly that ebikes, with some restrictions should have access to trails, especially paved and well-used trails. I find the arguments against them to be weak and non-sensical.

Overcrowding/over use: Off-road biking is continuing to grow. Some trails may be considered over-crowded now. If the goal is to reduce public use of public trails to reduce crowding or trail impacts, it would make just as much sense to ban all blue bikes, all female riders, or anyone over the age of 40. Crowds are here, more are coming, and selecting one user group arbitrarily is unfair, unreasonable, and lazy.

Safety and user experience: ebikes are not inherently more dangerous or intrusive than non-motorized bikes. Elite mountain bikers are capable of going just as fast and impacting other trail users just as much most ebikers. If the goal is to reduce bike speeds, it would make more sense to ban faster riders, perhaps by banning riders scoring high on Strava, those on suspension bikes, or NICA high school racers, regardless of the type of bike they are on.

Wildlife impacts: Applying lessons learned from restricting combustion engine motorized vehicles is inappropriate. ebikes are no noisier than traditional bikes. If the goal is to reduce noise impacts, banning open speakers and small children would be far more impactful. If the goal is to reduce impacts on sensitive species during high-risk time periods, bans on all access or at least all wheeled access would be more effective and make more sense.

Access for all: Electric assist can allow users with some disabilities or aging issues to continue using trails. Unlike motorcycles and ATVs relative to existing mountain bikes, they do not travel at excessive or unusual speeds, have significant noise impact, or cause excessive trail damage.

The old Jackson highway is an example of a route that is off-limits to ebikes for no rational reason and without any supporting evidence. ebikes do not climb fast enough to degrade user experiences or put anyone at risk. They descend steep grades at the same speed as non-powered bike (probably slower, considering the typical user demographics).

A blanket ban of ebikes is capricious, arbitrary, and not based on any peer-reviewed science that I can find. The BTNF has not provided evidence that banning ebikes while continuing to allow traditional bikes will achieve any of the desired goals.

Allowing ebike on trails could, at least in theory, increase overall public safety and decrease environmental impact in that users will be more inclined to ride to trailheads, rather than drive cars and trucks. In short, please use evidence to make this decision.

If emotions, anecdotal unsupported observations, and irrational fear of change do prevail in this case, it would be

worth considering the policy in effect in the Park City, UT area, which allows ebikes on trails only for those over 65 years of age or with demonstrated disabilities. Another option is to move slowly, opening just a few trails and observing the impacts over several years, while accounting for the impact of forcing more users into a limited area.