

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 10/25/2023 11:32:23 PM

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Comments: The Bridger Teton's proposal to open most current single-track, multi-use West-bank trails to E-bikes is a terrible idea. If this is starting "small", as the Forest Service puts it, it's truly disturbing. If they'd suggested starting with E-bikes in the Cache Creek area, they know the whole town would have had a fit. It seems to me they're trying to sneak this by, and set a dangerous precedent that will affect the whole valley.

Make no mistake: E-bikes are powered machines, quieter than a dirt-bike, but capable of speeds over 20 mph uphill. Do we want all these trails, currently loved by everyone; walkers, runners, horseback riders, and bikers- to be open to powered use?

Furthermore, there's no way to have multi-use, multi-directional trails with E-bikes; they go too fast uphill. The only way to avoid massive accidents is having one-way trails. Thus, if this proposal is approved, these trails won't be multi-use or accessible from either direction. Phillips Ridge, Snow-tel, Munger Mountain and more are currently popular trails for everyone. Soon they could be only for down-hill bikers. And if approved- town is next. That would be sacrificing the rights of everyone for those of E-bikes. Powered vehicles don't belong on our sacred trail systems.

If you think this doesn't affect you; think again. Get ready- it could be one-way on Hagen, Putt-Putt and more. And once approved, there's no going back. This will unfold in dramatic ways; multi-use trails will be segregated, many trails will be not be open anyone on foot or horseback, or they'll be too dangerous to use.

These trails will turn into one-way high traffic routes. People who don't have the fitness, skills, or reflexes to mountain bike will be all over out there. They'll be a danger to themselves and others. If people are imagining that they'll be on an E-bike riding trails like they used to, think again. It's a fallacy. An overworked Teton County Search and Rescue is going to have to pick up the pieces. Our infrastructure simply can't handle the increase in accidents that'll result.

Look at our bike paths- there's no doubt E-bikes are here to stay, and they are helpful with summer commuting. There's no doubt, however, that the pathways have become much more dangerous because of them. And that's with intensive education, on smooth pavement.

Lots of E-bikers poach trails now- you know who you are! They ride past signage and ignore the rules now, on single track and on the Old Pass Road. The Forest Service doesn't have the man-power to regulate or manage poachers now, so how will they manage the craziness that will ensue with thousands of them? We all know that our trail systems are so busy much of the time that there's no parking, and they experience very heavy use. The Forest doesn't have the capacity to manage and mitigate the current use. These trails, and the wildlife, can't handle the influx of E-bikes.

Far from creating more accessible, friendlier trails- it's going to create a situation of traffic, tension and anger between powered and unpowered users that will negatively impact everyone's backcountry experiences.

The argument that permitting E-bike use on Teton Pass trails will reduce parking issues is patently ridiculous. People will still drive, they don't want to breathe the fumes on the road, they're scared of traffic. Now we've added countless more users who all need parking, creating problems, not solving them. Also, E-bike batteries get extremely hot, especially on E-mountain bikes going uphill in the heat of summer, when fire danger is highest. How's the Forest going to deal with the increased fire hazard?

Consider impacts to wildlife- animals are pushed up and down trails constantly. This is already a hazard to people, and it's extremely stressful for deer, moose, elk, bear and other animals. We know from recent studies that ungulates are pushed dramatic distances from just minor trail use by a walker. So now, let's just add thousands more high speed users in one fell swoop to our trails?

The Forest hasn't thought through the consequences of this proposal. If they had, it would be dead in the water. Every resident in Teton County will be affected in some way. We have to decide where we draw the line. The group that is supposedly for the "multi-use of public lands", which has pushed this proposal onto the Forest Service, is nothing but a lobbying front for big money; big money to be made by companies selling E-bikes and renting them.

The E-bike industry will make a huge profit by taking over our trails. Look up the sticker price on an E-mountain bike. They'd like to do this all over our country- again, we are talking big money. Do we allow E-bike lobbyists to change the way we recreate forever? This is a fight that's coming to almost every mountain community, and it's our time now.

This isn't a small group of experienced bikers who now want assist on the trails. This is going to be everybody. Everybody is going to be out there on these bikes. Think hard about how you want to recreate, of all the beautiful moments you enjoy on your neighborhood single-track every day. Now imagine not being able to experience those things on your favorite backyard trails.

At what point do we say enough is enough? If folks can't get out there without a powered machine, I'm truly sorry. That's still no reason to open our trails to them. E-bikes can be on dirt-bike trails, dirt roads, in off-roading areas, or the pathways. I say- have a ball out there, where you won't conflict with every other trail user out there.

This is a pivotal moment for this valley. Bridger Teton- please continue to steward these trails for everyone, not the E-bike lobbyists, and say no to powered vehicles on our trails.

Annie Band and Jon Hunt
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