

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 10/30/2023 3:07:46 PM

First name: David

Last name: Loevner

Organization:

Title:

Comments: I write to express my strenuous objection to allowing e-bikes on the Phillips Ridge and Phillips Canyon Trails. Like many of our friends and neighbors, my wife and I along with our dog hike several days each week on these trails. They are also used by horse trail riders, though these are far fewer than hikers.

These trails were adapted for mountain biking less than ten years ago. Since then, we have seen a steady increase in the number of mountain bikers with whom we must share the trail. Generally, this isn't a problem. Most cyclists are attentive and courteous, and they stop when they see us so we can negotiate getting around each other. The "rule" that cyclists must give way to pedestrians is a fiction, however, as these trails are too narrow in most places for cyclists and hikers to pass one another without one party moving aside off the trail; almost invariably that means hikers (and dogs) having to step off the trail. On a few occasions we have had near-accidents, when cyclists failed to see us or our dog until they were nearly upon us, or simply chose not to stop, assuming we would jump out of their way. (We did!) We also observe that the condition of the trails has deteriorated considerably, with ruts from bike tires and increased erosion, since bikes were first allowed on them.

We foresee the introduction of e-bikes on these trails leading to greatly increased bike traffic, resulting in more frequent encounters with, and increased personal risk to, hikers and trail riders and accelerated trail damage. E-bikes are much heavier than traditional mountain bikes; an e-biker heading downhill colliding with a pedestrian will cause serious injury or death to the latter. Increased bike traffic would mean frequent interruption for the hiker, who must continually stop and step off the trail to yield to the biker. These trails aren't smooth, wide boulevards, unlike the town and county pathways--where e-bikes have brought benefits, e.g, for commuting, but also safety issues. We foresee the increased intensity and risk of on-trail encounters leading to some heated confrontations. Lastly, the effort required to climb the trail from Phillips trailhead by bike means that, today, the great majority of bikers ride from the pass to the Phillips trailhead; a de facto one-way system that neatly avoids the risk of bicycle collisions. If e-bikes are introduced, bike traffic will become two-way and head-on bicycle collisions a growing risk.

We urge the NFS to walk these trails in summer, at time of peak bicycle use, as it considers the serious consequences of allowing e-bikes on these trails.

David Loevner