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First name: Debra

Last name: Patla

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Comments for E-BIKE USE DESIGNATION ON SELECT JACKSON AREA TRAILS

Scoping. October 30, 2023

As a hiker, my opportunities to enjoy trails and birding in the Jackson-Wilson area on the BTNF have been limited by the large increase in mountain biking. The speed at which they suddenly appear, especially from behind, is daunting and often threatening. Their focus on the trail makes riders oblivious to just anything else, which increases the feeling of incompatibility. Try saying "Did you see that Great Horned Owl?" to a mountain biker...they just don't give a hoot -- it's about speed and muscles, and getting past the rest of us. And, trail conditions worsen as they plow through the mud, leaving a mess for the rest of us.

Including e-bikes and thus increasing trail-bike use as you propose is a terrible idea, magnifying the mountain bike problems. E-bikes are motorized and thus de-humanized. They create a special and privileged class of recreationist. E-bikes can go much faster and much farther; their impacts could be large and likely unknown or underestimated by the USFS, which is chronically under-staffed. The idea that you can enforce Class 1 as distinct from other types of e-bikes, or implement a permit system, is a big stretch.

For the Teton Pass area in particular, I am most concerned about wildlife. The huge increase in many types of recreation, workers commuting, and tourism has transformed the area hugely over the decades. Finding yet another way to increase human use is a dismal prospect for the animals trying to travel through or reside in this area. I urge you (and Caribou-Targhee NF) to stop piece-mealing projects. Take a hard look at the cumulative impacts of decisions over the years.

Questions:

--How much unauthorized e-bike use occurs on BTNF trails in the Jackson district? What limits your ability to quantify and manage such use? And how would this apply to your claim of being able to manage e-bikes in and adjacent to the proposed areas?

-Are you setting a dangerous precedent by using increasing unauthorized use of e-bikes as one of the rationales for this proposal? (We count on the USFS for management, rather than going with the flow of the latest fad!)

-What is it that e-bikers do not like about sharing trails with ORVs and motorcycles? What can BTNF do to mitigate that complaint?

And, is this the opinion of most e-bikers or just the most extreme fans driving the process?

-How many miles of low-use, two-track roads are available for e-bike use in the Jackson district? Why would e-bikes not use those? What could BTNF do to make open roads more welcoming for e-bikers? And could the e-bike fan-clubs use their considerable resources to help the USFS with maintenance of the small roads that the District wants to keep open?

-How many citations have been issued for the unauthorized e-bike use noted in Scoping? And, what does this tell us about your ability to enforce the sidebars of your proposal?

-What evidence do you have for the statement that e-bike use allowance will 'reduce vehicle traffic and alleviate congestion'? Please do not rely on speculation. Have any expanded uses for bikes anywhere on the BTNF led to less cars being driven and parked, and especially on Teton Pass?

-What evidence is there for claiming that allowing year-round e-bike use on Munger Mountain trail system will not increase impacts on elk and other wildlife? How do fast-moving bikes affect wildlife; why is noise compared to

motorcycles your only thought?

And in the Horsetail Creek area, does encouraging a long loop bike- ride in autumn, in a remote area, during hunting season and as trails become increasingly muddy, make any sense?

-How will the Wilderness Study Area and sensitive wildlife areas be protected from mountain e-bike intrusions?

I am concerned that the commercial e-bike and mountain bike industry is having too strong an influence on BTNF and other national forests.

Please stop using 'older people' as an excuse to expand assisted travel on trails; we do not need more 'ageism' from USFS!

Also, please consider safety. How many accidents and rescues already occur due to mountain biking? How much will this increase with e-biking increasing at the rates you describe? Should people with cardio problems be encouraged to go up trails steep trails on heavy bikes?

How much wildfire risk will be result from allowing battery-run bikes on trails?

Thank you for considering these questions and comments.

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