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First name: Tomas

Last name: Rofkahr

Organization:

Title:

Comments: The use of pedal assist e-bikes will not adversely impact the National Forest. I have conducted trail maintenance on trails throughout Arkansas including the Womble, the Ouachita Trail, and many mountain bike specific trails throughout Arkansas including the Monument Trails at Mount Nebo.

During all of this time I have seen users on both "acoustic" and pedal assist electric bikes and their effects on these trails. What I have found is that both forms of riding are no more impactful than the other. For pedal assist bikes or traditional mountain bikes, the impact to the trail is very specific to **one** thing - how well the rider follows common sense trail rules.

- 1) Minimize skidding and aggressive stops
- 2) Not riding the trail when it is so wet that it is soft - or during a freeze-thaw cycle

Pedal Assist bikes are rapidly growing in use, and popularity. An aging nation is turning more and more to pedal assist because they allow riders to ride **more** with less effort.

While I believe (based on experience as an IMBA trained trail maintainer) that pedal assist e-bikes will not adversely impact the trail condition - I also do not believe that they will negatively impact the sense of "nature" or "wildness" that trails like the Syllamo, Womble, or Upper Buffalo enjoy.

These bikes are not only nearly completely silent, but their range is still limited by battery capacity. Additionally, they bring more people to our trails and forests which I believe is vital for their protection. Americans do not value things they cannot see or experience. A pedal assist e-bike is a means to ensuring older Americans (and we are increasingly elder nation) and Americans with service-connected disabilities can continue to enjoy the forest.

A common myth about pedal assist bikes is that they are "motorcycles" or have a throttle. I would agree that a bicycle with a motor and a throttle - is a motorcycle and thus should not be allowed in a national forest. But a pedal assist e-bike must be pedaled and ridden like a normal bike. Calorie burn and heart rate across a two-hour ride on trails will differ only in the distance traveled. The rider is simply able to enjoy more time in nature - and isn't that the whole point?