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Organization:

Title:

Comments: I would like to comment on the proposal to allow Class I E-bikes on select trails in the Deschutes National Forest. My position on this is very much against this proposal and I appreciate the opportunity to let you know why.

First of all, one of the objectives the proposal mentions is to reduce conflicts between users, thus the E-bikes are being allowed on primarily mountain bike trails. This is completely opposite of what you should do if you are going to allow E-bikes. There is a big conflict between traditional bicycles and E-bikes. E-bikes are essentially Bicycle-Shaped-Electric-Motorcycles. They may look like a bike, but a vehicle that is powered and can go up to 20mph is a motorized vehicle. I think anyone in the Forest Service who has worked on trails issues is aware that mountain bikes and motorcycles don't mesh well so these users are usually separated.

A motorized vehicle that can go faster than a bicycle is now going to add another class of user that bicycles have to yield for (in addition to pedestrians and horses) as the E-bikes will be going faster and want to pass. I am an experienced mountain bike rider, a solid intermediate in skill, and my average speed on mountain bike rides in our area is 8 mph. I usually do not go over 15mph even on a downhill. Does it really make sense to put me on a singletrack trail with users who can go 20mph even uphill?

In addition, Peterson Ridge trails have become much more congested in recent years with bicycles, hikers, and people walking their dogs (mostly off leash and often not in control). It is already difficult to ride your bicycle there on weekends because there are so many other users to navigate. The whole reason I ride my bike off-road is to get away from motorized vehicles! The roads are increasingly less safe to ride my bike on. Where am I supposed to go to do that now? There will be nowhere. I think the end result you will accomplish is that these trails will become E-bike trails and no one else will want to be on them. I understand that E-bikes are popular and you want to accommodate their desire for trails. However, they should be on trails that allow motorbikes, not human-powered bicycles.

Also, "select trails" seems to be the majority of Phil's and Peterson Ridge. If you decide to move forward with this disastrous plan, I think a much smaller percentage of the most popular trails would be a better test. To actually be a test and then see how it goes. Get input after a period of time with a reassessment. If it doesn't work out, make changes.

I ride my bike for fitness, for fun, for mental health, and at my doctor's strong recommendation for my chronic health problems. Reading the news about this proposal has made me sad and feel fairly negative about cycling in this area moving forward. Cycling is a big enough part of my life that if I can't continue these activities, I will honestly be forced to look at my options to move elsewhere.

Thank you for considering my concerns.