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Comments: The Final EA has not adequately addressed the following points:

1. Proposed Action will change the nature of recreational experience - Class 1 e-bikes allow riders to ride much farther and faster than non-motorized mountain bikes. This will likely lead to increased user conflicts on trails that are already overcrowded. Where they have been used, such as near Lake Tahoe, e-bikes have resulted in increased conflicts among non-motorized and motorized riders, especially on uphill sections of single-track trails. The single-track trails near Sisters, such as the Peterson Ridge Trail system, have been designed as cross-country mountain bike trails with a mix of uphill and downhill sections. These trails are also heavily used by trail runners, hikers and dog walkers. Higher speed e-bike riders ascending and descending these trails will certainly lead to even greater user conflicts and reduced recreational experience for other users.
2. Lack of trail-specific user data - The Recreational Report submitted for this EA admits on Page 4 that "There is a lack of quantitative data to describe volume of trail use and use patterns at the trail specific level." Trail use on the Peterson Ridge trail system on the Sisters Ranger District, in particular, has increased dramatically in the last few years, especially since the development of the new trailhead and parking area. As mentioned above, this trail system is also heavily used by hikers, dog-walkers, and trail runners. Most trail users are concerned that adding e-bikes to allowable uses on the Peterson Ridge trail system will greatly increase the overall numbers of trail users leading to increased impacts and user conflicts.
3. Inadequate consideration of the cumulative effects of this and other proposed actions - This proposal needs to be considered for cumulative effects along with the STAR project to build additional trails on the Sisters Ranger District and the proposal to allow mountain bike shuttles on the Sisters Ranger District. The cumulative effects of all these proposals will likely exacerbate the environmental and social impacts.
4. No consideration of limited Emergency Medical Response in Sisters, OR - E-bikes travelling at higher speeds will increase the possibility of injuries to the riders themselves and other trail users. This will likely impact the limited capability of local emergency response agencies. The lack of Urgent Care facilities in Sisters, OR means that injured recreationists will need to be transported to Redmond or Bend.
5. Ample opportunities already exist for e-bike use - The Deschutes National Forest has some of the highest road density in the Region and the Nation as shown in the Terrestrial Condition Assessment (Figures 1 and 2). Surely, there are ample opportunities for e-bike use on forest roads and two-tracks without the need to further increase traffic on already crowded single-track mountain bike trails.

The Final EA discusses the need for enhanced enforcement related to appropriate use of e-bikes and the need to distinguish between the allowed Class 1 bikes and prohibited Class 2 and 3 bikes. Given the current reductions in Forest Service staffing and budgets, it is unlikely that adequate enforcement resources will be available any time soon.

For the reasons listed above, I object to the selected Action Alternative and urge you to select the No Action alternative and deny the use of e-bikes on singletrack mountain bike trails on the Deschutes National Forest. At a minimum, the Selected Alternative should be revised to remove the Peterson Ridge trail system from the selected trails that will allow Class 1 e-bikes. Thank you for your consideration.