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Comments:

Please accept these comments regarding proposed changes to the US Forest Service e-bike (eMTB) policy from Flathead Area Mountain Bikers (FAMB), a nonprofit based in the Flathead valley of Northwest Montana. Our mission is preserving and advancing mountain bike opportunities in our area.

FAMB supports the Forest Service adopting a standard definition for an e-bike (eMTB) separate from a traditional mountain bike. The final directive should specify that eMTBs are not be categorized as "motorized" by the Forest Service, because they are significantly different in form and function from motorcycles.

FAMB supports the Forest Service adopting a three three-tiered classification for eMTBs (Class 1, 2, and 3).

FAMB supports giving local Forest Service districts the authority to decide whether and where eMTBs should be allowed beyond trails that are currently open to motorized use, as long as access is not lost or impeded for traditional mountain bikes.

Only Class 1 eMTBs should be considered for use on trails that are currently designated non-motorized. The final directive also must lay out a means for allowing class 1 eMTBs on select non-motorized trails while retaining a trail's non-motorized status, as the recent Bureau of Land Management final rule does.

Additionally, FAMB urges the Forest Service to create guidance to help local districts determine what trails might be appropriate for class 1 eMTBs. We support the Forest Service consulting local advocacy groups for guidance during this process. We also encourage the Forest Service to provide local districts with guidance and resources to help with enforcing the regulations, including ticketing eMTB users riding on non-permitted trails.

FAMB takes this position because we believe that eMTBs will expand recreational opportunities and enjoyment of our public lands to an ever greater segment of the population, including traditional mountain bikers, the elderly, persons with disabilities, adaptive athletes, and others who may not be able to ride a traditional mountain bike on trails, whatever the reason.