

Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW)
E-Bike Public Process: Townhall Meeting #1
May 12, 2022

Final Meeting Summary

Introductions & Opening Remarks

The facilitator welcomed attendees and thanked them for joining. The May 12 meeting was the first of two public “town hall”-style meetings. A second town hall will be held in the evening on May 18 to offer more flexibility for members of the public who would like to attend. Each meeting will be 90 minutes and include an introduction to the E-bike public process, explanation of current regulations, and opportunity for public input in small groups. Both meetings will follow the same agenda and format. A recording of the presentation will be made available for attendees and those who were unable to attend.

Andrea Martin, Acting Statewide Recreation Manager, DNR, provided opening remarks. DNR and WDFW received direction from the legislature to convene a public process on the use of electrical assist bicycles (E-bikes) on non-motorized natural surface trails and closed roads on DNR- and WDFW-managed lands and share the findings in a report to the legislature this fall.

The facilitator reviewed the meeting agenda, logistics, and ground rules.

Presentation

Heide Anderson, Recreation Planner, WDFW, provided background on Senate Bill 5452 which directs DNR and WDFW to convene the public process and collect input on use of E-bikes on natural surface trails and roads that are limited to non-motorized use and develop a report to the legislature. The public process is to include, but not be limited to, input from Tribes, individuals with disabilities, and representatives from the conservation, equestrian, hiking, hunting, and traditional mountain bike and E-bike communities. The current public town hall is the first of two intended to solicit public input from the diverse constituencies of trail users throughout Washington.

Heide explained the differences between the three E-bike classifications defined by current state law ([RCW 46.04.169](#)):

- DNR and WDFW currently allow all classes of E-bikes on motorized roads and trails open to the public.
- E-bikes of any class are not currently allowed on DNR- or WDFW-managed lands and trails unless specifically designated by signage.
- Riders with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) placards can use Class 1 and Class 2 E-bikes on all non-motorized roads and trails where bicycles are allowed.

Heide also reviewed E-bike policies on other public lands, highlighting the US Forest Service E-bike policy that was recently released after several years of internal evaluation. Heide concluded her presentation highlighting some known challenges regarding E-bike use, including environmental and social impacts, noting that more research is needed to fully understand the impacts.

Public Input Period

Attendees were placed into four small breakout rooms for discussion. The facilitation team led each breakout group and recorded comments on a virtual Mural whiteboard. A copy of the Mural can be found in the appendix.

Participants were asked to consider responses to the following three questions:

1. Under what circumstances, if any, should E-bikes be allowed on non-motorized trails and closed roads on lands managed by DNR and WDFW?
2. Which of the three E-bike classifications (Class 1, Class 2, Class 3) may be allowable, if any or at all?
3. What opportunities, challenges, or concerns should be considered regarding E-bike use on non-motorized trails and closed roads on lands managed by DNR and WDFW?

The following sections document feedback, comments, and concerns for each question from all four breakout rooms. Input is organized by theme.

Question 1: Under what circumstances, if any, should e-bikes be allowed on non-motorized trails and closed roads on lands managed by DNR and WDFW?

General Circumstances

- *Trail-specific access:*
 - There should be places to ride E-bikes on trails, but not on non-motorized trails.
 - E-bikes should be allowed on one-way, bike-specific trails at the speed of a non-motorized bike.
 - E-bikes should not be allowed on trails where pedal bikes are not allowed.
 - E-bikes should not be allowed on non-motorized trails shared with equestrians.
 - E-bikes should be allowed generally, but not on very steep trails.
 - What is allowable depends on the type of trail (natural surface vs. closed roads).
 - E-bikes should not be allowed on non-motorized trails except for riders who need E-bikes due to age and disabilities.
 - Closed roads, paved roads, and gravel roads should be accessible to E-bikes.
 - DNR and WDFW should keep E-bikes off technical trails.
- *Access on all trails:*
 - DNR and WDFW should allow E-bikes anywhere a bicycle would be allowed.
 - E-bikes should be allowed everywhere.
 - Multi-use trails should be reconsidered for the enjoyment of all.
 - E-bikes should be allowed under all circumstances.
 - Trail design should take the full user group into account.
 - Rules and regulations on class types need to be considered in both high- and low-use areas.
 - Allowable uses should depend on trail type.

- *E-bike specific regulations:*
 - Bikes able to attain high speeds of around 40 mph should have separate rules and regulations.
 - DNR and WDFW should consider permits for all E-bikes. This would also help generate revenue for parks.
 - DNR and WDFW should push manufacturers to label their bikes with what class they are.

Accessibility Considerations

- Permits should not target one user group (do not single out E-bikes for speed concerns and not other users).
- Additional permits and/or high cost of permits makes trails inaccessible to populations that cannot afford it.
- E-bikes allow access for people who have physical limitations or disabilities. Public lands should be accessible to all.
- Many people have physical limitations that are not to an ADA level but still benefit from accessibility measures.
- Non-ADA senior E-bike users may use E-bike throttle to start on a steep hill or get quickly from one place to another if needed. [This individual does not] ride at 20 mph for long periods of time. The battery runs down quickly at max speeds.
- The state should require a doctor's recommendation to qualify for special disability consideration. This is currently the case for Disabled Hunters Program.
- DNR and WDFW should not exclude more people from trails by limiting use of E-bikes.
- DNR and WDFW should maintain ADA accessibility.
- DNR and WDFW need to consider those who are less able and do not qualify for an ADA placard.
- E-bikes are important for accessibility for a lot of people.
- It is ableist to not allow E-bikes on public lands.
- People with disabilities have the right to recreate.

Trail/Environmental Considerations

- DNR and WDFW should only allow E-bikes on motorized trails because of trail wear.
- DNR and WDFW should allow Class 1 because trail wear for Class 1 is similar to pedal bikes.
- Some ecosystems, such as steep climbs or sandy soils, are more impacted by E-bikes.
- Throttles help with steep inclines.
- Low visibility on trails should be a limiting factor.
- DNR and WDFW should conduct an environmental assessment of E-bike impact on trails.

Etiquette Considerations

- Respectful E-bike use is low-impact. Class 3 bikes may tend to be used more aggressively.
- Use of trails that is respectful of other user needs is important regardless of user type or bike type (regular mountain bike or E-bike).
- Trail users should use common trail sense and courtesy.
- Issues often come down to common trail courtesy and proper etiquette.

- Trail etiquette for bike/horse interactions is needed. DNR and WDFW should educate users on how to pass horses.
- Etiquette education (how to interact with each other on trails based on different needs) is needed for all user groups.
- Irresponsible trail use is about individual use, not an entire user group. Beware of stereotyping.

Communication Considerations

- DNR and WDFW should publish good biking/user etiquette information.
- DNR and WDFW should increase information about trail courtesy/trail usage regulations.
- Physical signage should be used to designate use and help with passing other users.
- Examples of good area trail use descriptions include the Trailforks mobile application.
- Speed limit signs at trailheads are helpful for all user types.
- E-bike classifications must be clear and simple.
- DNR and WDFW should communicate risk to the public so as not to lose marginal users, hikers, and equestrians, who are more vulnerable to speed problems posed by all bike users.
- DNR and WDFW should communicate the differentiation between trail types.
- Sensible, fair, and consistent trail rules are needed. DNR and WDFW should clearly communicate these rules to mitigate conflict and fear of other user types.
- DNR and WDFW should implement signage outlining trail direction in conflict-prone/high-traffic areas.
- DNR and WDFW should clarify the difference in classification. For example, clarify openly what is a “motorcycle” and an “E-bike.”
- DNR and WDFW should ensure clarification of classification difference amongst all users (not just bikers).
- DNR and WDFW should define terms clearly: “Non-motorized” vs. “Motorized”; Class 1, Class 2, Class 3; “E-bikes”; etc.

Safety Considerations

- Speedometers should be on all E-bikes.
- Speed limit is the main problem with E-bikes.
- Speed limitations are important.
- Speed limits on any kind of bikes (non-motorized and E-bikes) are concerning.
- Bike/horse interactions pose safety concerns.
- DNR and WDFW should establish speed limits that apply to all classes (15-20 mph).
- Audible warning devices should be a requirement on all bicycles to alert others upon approach.
- Safety features are important on multiuse trails, especially on trails shared with horses.
- DNR and WDFW should develop safety rules and regulations to allow people to have fun.
- Horse riders would appreciate bells on E-bikes.
- Limiting speeds on trails can work with Class 1 E-bikes if they work similarly to pedal bikes.

Question 2: Which of the three e-bike classifications (Class 1, Class 2, Class 3) may be allowable if any or all?

Class 1 E-Bikes

Most, but not all, participants spoke in support of allowing Class 1 E-bikes on non-motorized trails. The following shows the range of reasons provided.

- Class 1 riders are often experienced mountain bike riders.
- Class 1 E-bikes should be allowed on trails that allow regular/analog bikes.
- Class 1 E-bikes should be allowed where mountain bikes are allowed.
- Class 1 is virtually identical to standard pedal bikes – allow anywhere pedal/analog bikes are allowed.
- Class 1 should be considered a “bicycle.”
- Class 1 is very important for public access.

Class 1 & Class 3 E-Bikes

Some participants spoke in support of allowing Class 1 and Class 3 E-bikes on non-motorized trails because they do not have a throttle. Participants observed that a throttle made Class 2 E-bikes a motor vehicle, blurring the line between an E-bike and an E-motorcycle.

Class 1 & Class 2 E-Bikes

Some participants spoke in support of allowing Class 1 and Class 2 E-bikes on non-motorized trails. Many noted a concern about speed and supported Class 1 and 2 E-bikes because they were both limited to 20 miles per hour. The range of responses is listed below.

- Class 1 and Class 2 should be allowed on non-motorized trails.
- Class 1 and Class 2 should be allowed on gated gravel roads/logging roads.
- Class 1 and Class 2 should be allowed everywhere.
- Potentially limit rental bikes to Class 1 or Class 2, with certification.
- Class 1 and Class 2 throttles allow for a gradual increase in speed with a torque sensor. Throttles on E-Bikes offer sufficient safety measures.
- Class 1 and Class 2 go the same speed.

Class 2 E-Bikes

The following additional comments were made about Class 2 E-bikes.

- Class 2 is concerning because they have a throttle.
- Class 2 should be allowed with ADA placard.
- Class 2 is fine for adaptive sports or accessibility. They should have a placard or permit and be limited without a placard or permit.
- Class 2 could be allowed with ADA placard to create more access for riders who need more mobility assistance.
- Front-wheel powered Class 2 E-bikes may cause excessive trail damage due to the front drive wheel.
- Objection to Class 2 E-bikes due to behavior and improper etiquette experiences.

- There have been negative experiences with Class 2 riders motoring down trails at high speeds. Further education regarding speed and other trail users' interests is needed.

Class 2 & Class 3 E-Bikes

The following additional comments were made about Class 2 and 3 E-bikes.

- Class 2 and Class 3 need to be further considered – 20 mph speed is the same for Class 1 and 2.
- Class 2 and Class 3 E-bikes should not be allowed on non-motorized trails.
- Class 2 and Class 3 E-bikes should be allowed on closed road areas only.
- Class 2 and Class 3 should not be allowed on non-motorized trails. Class 3 should be allowed on roads.
- Class 3 is too fast for multi-use trails.

All E-bike Classes

A few participants indicated all E-bike classes should be allowed and a few participants indicated no E-bikes should be allowed on non-motorized trails.

- All classes should be allowed.
- All three Classes should be allowed. Research supports that E-bikes do not cause more damage than other bikes.
- Multi-use motorized trails should include all E-bike-specific options.
- All pedal-assist classes should be allowed.
- Any class of motorized bike should not be allowed on non-motorized trails.

Question 3: What opportunities, challenges, or concerns should be considered regarding E-bike use on non-motorized trails and closed roads on lands managed by DNR and WDFW?

Opportunities

- Revenue from E-bike users supports local rural economies.
- Increases in the number of park users is a good thing but needs to be managed.
- Pilot programs to learn more, such as Anacortes Community Forest North in Anacortes, WA, are needed.
- DNR and WDFW should find opportunities for trail users to work together and share the trails with multiple users.
- Advocacy work and public relations (including trailhead signage) are needed.
- DNR and WDFW should extend allowable use on logging roads.
- Pedal-assist bikes are crucial for allowing people who are not able to ride a regular mountain bike.
- E-bikes are opportunities for people recovering from injury and getting people back on the trail. There are health benefits of "getting out there."
- E-bikes increase and provide accessibility. E-bikes allow users to keep up with stronger riding friends.

- E-bikes allow for greater access for all because less time is needed to ride, there are no gas needs, and there is no need to park at trailheads directly.
- DNR and WDFW should include trail designation directions for areas with a variety of user groups.
- DNR and WDFW should consider specific outreach to younger riders.

Challenges

- E-bikes take away from the backcountry hunting experience.
- E-bikes enable more exploitation of natural resources and hunting game.
- Enforcing use of E-bikes is a challenge.
- WDFW and DNR capacity to enforce E-bike use on trails is a challenge.
- E-bikes are not financially accessible to all. They are a higher-income activity that gives an unfair advantage.
- Getting information out to the public about regulations and where they can/cannot be ridden is a challenge.
- Regulating imported E-bikes that do not fit the classes is a challenge.
- DNR and WDFW face enforcement and regulation challenges.
- Search and rescue resources are a challenge. The weight of the bike and the person should be considered.
- Managing E-bike usage across agencies and jurisdictions with different policies is a challenge.
- Evolving E-bike technology is a challenge to manage.

Concerns

Participants expressed the following as concerns:

- Safety
- Speed.
- E-bike “hacking” to enable higher speeds, etc.
- Wildfire concern with anything electric, especially during high fire season. Note the limit on electric chainsaws – how does this compare to E-bike usage?
- Backcountry horse riding community sharing non-motorized trails with technology
- A lack of consensus on the research on E-bike impacts on trails
- Increase in trail use/access driven by allowing E-bikes
- Trail maintenance. More use requires more maintenance=.
- Noise (or lack-thereof) and potential for other users to be surprised by fast-moving bikes
- Do not want to endanger traditional bike use
- Growth of the sport may create crowding of trails
- E-bikes are heavier than analog bikes and could be hard to control safely on steep ground.
- Lack of biking skill of individual users could be hazardous
- People who do not understand E-bike technology tend to oppose them
- Impacts to trails and the need for additional studies
- To be proactive, rules and regulations on class types need to be considered for both high use and low use areas.

Attendance

In total, 127 people attended the May 12 Townhall including the following agency and facilitation team staff.

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

- Heide Andersen, Recreation Planner
- Eryn Couch, Communications Manager
- Joel Sisolak, Lands Planning, Recreation and Outreach Manager

Washington Department of Natural Resources

- Andrea Martin, Statewide Recreation Manager

Triangle Associates (Facilitation Team)

- Alyssa Bonini, Triangle Associates
- Anna Shepherd, Triangle Associates
- Annalise Ritter, Triangle Associates
- Cheryl Klotz, Triangle Associates
- Claire Wendle, Triangle Associates
- Jacob Hibbeln, Triangle Associates
- Lucila Gambino, Triangle Associates
- Thomas Christian, Triangle Associates

E-Bike Town Hall: 5/12/22

Breakout Group #1 - Thomas

1) Under what circumstances, if any, should E-bikes be allowed on non-motorized trails and closed roads on lands managed by DNR and WDFW?

| | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Class 1 | Class 2 | Class 3 |
| Allowed on all trails | Allowed on all trails | Allowed on all trails |

2) Which of the three classes may be allowable if any or all?

| | | | |
|-----------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| All should be allowed | Class 1 | Class 2 | Class 3 |
|-----------------------|---------|---------|---------|

3) What opportunities, challenges, or concerns should be considered regarding E-Bike use on non-motorized trails and closed roads on lands managed by DNR and WDFW?

| | | |
|---------------|------------|----------|
| Opportunities | Challenges | Concerns |
| ... | ... | ... |

Breakout Group #2 - Claire

1) Under what circumstances, if any, should E-bikes be allowed on non-motorized trails and closed roads on lands managed by DNR and WDFW?

| | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Class 1 | Class 2 | Class 3 |
| Allowed on all trails | Allowed on all trails | Allowed on all trails |

2) Which of the three classes may be allowable if any or all?

| | | |
|---------|---------|---------|
| Class 1 | Class 2 | Class 3 |
|---------|---------|---------|

3) What opportunities, challenges, or concerns should be considered regarding E-Bike use on non-motorized trails and closed roads on lands managed by DNR and WDFW?

| | | |
|---------------|------------|----------|
| Opportunities | Challenges | Concerns |
| ... | ... | ... |

Breakout Group #3 - Lucia

1) Under what circumstances, if any, should E-bikes be allowed on non-motorized trails and closed roads on lands managed by DNR and WDFW?

| | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Class 1 | Class 2 | Class 3 |
| Allowed on all trails | Allowed on all trails | Allowed on all trails |

2) Which of the three classes may be allowable if any or all?

| | | |
|---------|---------|---------|
| Class 1 | Class 2 | Class 3 |
|---------|---------|---------|

3) What opportunities, challenges, or concerns should be considered regarding E-Bike use on non-motorized trails and closed roads on lands managed by DNR and WDFW?

| | | |
|---------------|------------|----------|
| Opportunities | Challenges | Concerns |
| ... | ... | ... |

Breakout Group #4 - Alyssa

1) Under what circumstances, if any, should E-bikes be allowed on non-motorized trails and closed roads on lands managed by DNR and WDFW?

| | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Class 1 | Class 2 | Class 3 |
| Allowed on all trails | Allowed on all trails | Allowed on all trails |

2) Which of the three classes may be allowable if any or all?

| | | |
|---------|---------|---------|
| Class 1 | Class 2 | Class 3 |
|---------|---------|---------|

3) What opportunities, challenges, or concerns should be considered regarding E-Bike use on non-motorized trails and closed roads on lands managed by DNR and WDFW?

| | | |
|---------------|------------|----------|
| Opportunities | Challenges | Concerns |
| ... | ... | ... |