

Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW)
E-Bike Public Process: Townhall Meeting #2
May 18, 2022

Final Meeting Summary

Introductions & Opening Remarks

The facilitator welcomed attendees and thanked them for joining. The May 18 meeting is the second of two public “town hall”-style meetings. A townhall was also held May 12. The purpose is to introduce the E-bike public process, current regulations, and hear 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:*
 - E-bikes should be allowed on trails separate from hikers or equestrians.
 - DNR and WDFW should develop E-bike-only trails.
 - E-bikes should be allowed on some trails but not all.
- *Access on all trails:*
 - E-bikes should be allowed on a case-by-case basis.
 - E-bikes should be allowed on closed roads.
 - E-bikes should be allowed where trail speed limits apply. DNR and WDFW should apply speed limits to all types of bikes.
 - DNR and WDFW should not allow E-bikes on any trails because they are motorized.
- *E-bike specific regulations:*
 - WDFW's requirements for disability use of E-bikes on non-motorized trails are clear and concise.
 - Washington should establish a clear state policy rather than case-by-case basis which would be complicated for users and agencies.
 - E-skateboards should be covered by E-bike rules. DNR and WDFW should make regulations for all electric assist devices.

Accessibility Considerations

- E-bikes advance inclusion in recreation and allow people with various levels of ability to recreate together on public lands.
- E-Bikes allow for greater access, which leads to greater appreciation and greater protection.
- E-bikes support access for seniors, older riders, and those who do not have a disability but have physical limitations. They and allow riders to continue to be active.

- E-bikes keep people active and exercising who might otherwise quit riding because it has become too hard to climb hills or keep up with friends.
- E-bike users should not need a car to be able to access trails. Needing a car to obtain an ADA placard is concerning.
- ADA placard holders should be allowed to use E-bikes on trails. DNR and WDFW should consider offering a sticker for riders with disabilities to demonstrate why the users are on the trail with an E-bike.
- There are barriers to acquiring ADA certifications. DNR and WDFW should offer assistance for applying for ADA placards.
- DNR and WDFW should only allow E-bikes with a throttle (Class 2) if a user has an ADA placard.
- Concern over throttle is more of a perception. Throttle helps users start, because E-bikes are heavier, and is a benefit for older riders.

Trail/Environmental Considerations

- Technical features on single track trails, including curves and grades naturally limit E-bike access and speed.
- DNR and WDFW should clearly mark trails/entry points for access.
- DNR and WDFW should not allow E-bikes to have a negative effect on wildlife.
- E-bikes and bikes could have their own trails to avoid clashing with other uses, specifically horseback riders.
- DNR and WDFW should separate users onto different trails. Multi-use trails are a challenge.
- DNR and WDFW should develop more trails for hikers and horses only.
- DNR and WDFW should consider legislation regarding use of E-bikes on WDFW/DNR lands, so the decisions are made by elected representatives.

Etiquette/Education Considerations

Many participants spoke to the importance of an informed recreation user community, public education, and trail etiquette respectful of all users.

- Users should share trails.
- The question about E-bike use is really a question about good trail etiquette and respect for other users.
- DNR and WDFW should provide multi-use trail etiquette information.
- Rules of the trail should apply to behavior, not to the type of apparatus used to access the trail.
- Courtesy, communication, and awareness are necessary. All kinds of interactions can cause disruption with poor communication no matter the method of travel.
- Education can help people know how to approach horse riders.
- Good trail etiquette carries over from normal mountain bikes to E-bikes.
- Education about E-bikes is important to address speed and trail damage concerns. E-Bikes are not always faster or more damaging to trails than analog bikes.
- Education/outreach on appropriate behavior is a major need. Education/outreach should focus on co-existence.
- Users should respect each user group and each user's use.
- DNR and WDFW should focus education on fun and respect for all.

- DNR and WDFW should use carefully placed signage to communicate which uses are allowed and how to pass other user groups but should not over sign a trail.
- E-bikers who approach others quietly and quickly should call ahead or warn other users they are approaching. They should use bells and verbal call outs.
- DNR and WDFW should develop safety standards into a trail etiquette, particularly regarding riding around horseback riders.

Safety Considerations

- Trail user safety is a major consideration.
- Trail use speed is a major consideration.
- E-bikes (Class 1 and Class 2) are not likely to reach their 20 mph max while going uphill. All bicycles can achieve high speeds going downhill.
- DNR and WDFW should designate speed limits on each trail based on safety.
- The safety concerns related to horse and E-bike conflicts is the same as horse and analog bike conflicts.
- DNR and WDFW should consider the speed of horses (slow), the potential speed of bikes (fast), and sightlines on a trail when considering if bikes should be allowed on trails.
- Horses can be spooked easily. E-bike users should add bells or audible warning devices to E-bikes that move quickly and quietly on the trail.
- E-bikes that can travel up to 20-28 mph may not be able to stop quickly on soft surfaces.
- Audio impacts to nature are minimal because E-bikes are quiet.
- Non-motorized bikes can go 20 mph downhill, and the safety concern is the same with E-bikes. Horses are also capable of going very fast.
- Speed is a problem when E-bikes overtake analog bikes on a climb.
- E-bikes are slower on downhill trails than pedal bikes, due to weight.
- It is hard to travel 10 mph uphill on an E-bike. Batteries drain quickly if using a Class 2 throttle.
- DNR and WDFW should limit trail speed to 15 mph for safety.
- DNR and WDFW should limit trail speed to 20 mph for safety.
- E-bikes do not spook horses more than analog mountain bikes. Both are quiet and can move quickly.

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

All E-bike Classes

Some participants indicated that no E-bikes should be allowed on non-motorized trails. Multiple individuals pointed out that E-bikes have electric motors and should be considered motorized. The following additional comments were made about not allowing any E-bike use.

- DNR and WDFW should not allow E-bikes on non-motorized trails because they have electric motors.
- E-bikes should be classified as electric vehicles.
- DNR and WDFW should treat E-bikes like any other motorized vehicle. They will have an impact on wildlife.

- E-bikes and motorcycles are both “bikes with motors.” It does not matter if they are powered by electricity or gasoline.
- No E-bikes should be allowed. The only exception should be for ADA-placard users.
- No class of E-bike should be allowed. There are not clear lines about what is safe/unsafe and trail use expectations.

Some participants indicated that all E-bike classes should be allowed.

- All three classes should be allowed on all non-motorized trails.
- Anywhere a bike is allowed, an E-bike should be allowed.
- Anywhere bikes can go, E-bikes should be able to go.
- DNR and WDFW should allow all E-bikes on two-track trails.
- All E-bikes should be allowed when a trail is open and has visible sightlines.
- All E-bikes should be allowed on roads.
DNR and WDFW should allow all E-bikes but keep them separate from horses.
- DNR and WDFW should allow all E-bikes. There is no strong difference between classes; the classes do not accelerate differently.

Class 1 E-Bikes

Many participants spoke in support of allowing Class 1 E-bikes on non-motorized trails. The following shows the range of reasons provided.

- Class 1 should be allowed, but not others.
- Class 1 is not much different than an analog bike and should be treated the same.
- Only Class 1 should be allowed because Class 2 (with throttle) and Class 3 (increased speed) are more appropriate on current motorized trails.
- Only Class 1 should be allowed because Class 2 and Class 3 should be treated as a motorized vehicle.
- Only Class 1 should be allowed to be conservative and then reevaluate.
- Class 1 E-bikes should be considered non-motorized.
- DNR and WDFS should allow Class 1 on single track but not allow Class 2 or 3 on single track due to weight concerns.

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.

- Class 1 and Class 3 should be allowed because they require the rider to pedal. DNR and WDFW should allow them where all pedal analog bicycles are allowed.
- DNR and WDFW should allow Class 1 and consider allowing Class 3.
- Class 1 and Class 3 should be allowed but not Class 2 because of the throttle.

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 Class 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 trails used by other analog bikes because they are limited to 20 mph. Not everyone has an interest in going fast.
- Class 1 and Class 2 should be considered non-motorized. They do not go fast enough to have a negative environmental impact.
- DNR and WDFW should not allow Class 3 because of the speed allowance.
- Some participants noted the throttle on Class 2 E-Bikes help riders maneuver around obstacles.

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

- E-bikes are a great tool for trail maintenance and can facilitate use of trail-maintenance tools in the backcountry, such as chain saws.
- E-bikes can assist search and rescue.
- E-bikes are quiet and have no additional audio impact on the environment or other users' experiences.
- DNR and WDFW should evaluate data from other areas where E-bikes are allowed to consider use in Washington.
- DNR and WDFW should add recreation use and spread it out on little-used forest roads.
- E-bikes make getting to trails more accessible without cars, which is good for carbon emission goals.
- E-bikes lower barriers for those wanting to experience the outdoors for the first time.
- E-bikes facilitate access and appreciation for public lands which leads to engagement in trail maintenance and environmental protection.
- E-bikes have economic and environmental benefits.
- Manufacturers could develop bikes that can adjust between classes depending on their location on the trail.

Challenges

- Use on a lot of trails from all types of recreation has increased significantly.
- It is difficult for users to understand changing use regulations between jurisdictions.
- It is difficult to decipher class of bikes. Users will ride them everywhere and not know what class they have.
- Enforcement of speed limits and class by class use is a challenge.
- DNR and WDFW have limited time and funding for enforcement.
- DNR and WDFW do not have the capacity or ability to enforce rules.
- Representation in decision making is a challenge. DNR and WDFW should hear more from equestrians or underrepresented groups.

- Funding for trails is a challenge.
- E-bikes have wide handlebars and are a challenge to pass on the trail.
- Management of trails and use in general is a challenge.

Concerns

Participants expressed the following as concerns:

- E-bikes with a throttle.
- E-bikes' power.
- The unclear line between a Class 2 E-bike (throttle) and a motorcycle
- E-bikes are very quiet on the trail and approach quickly and can surprise other users. This is a concern specifically for horseback riders.
- Too many signs on a trail are a concern and should be considered if signs are used for education
- Too many signs on a trail can negatively affect experience. Caution should be used with the number of signs if signs are used as a solution for multi-use etiquette.
- Use on a lot of trails from all types of recreation has increased significantly
- Trail damage due to the weight of a heavy E-bike, including ruts on trails
- Erosion has increased in some areas due to the impact of Class 2 and Class 3 E-bikes
- Lack of respect amongst users is a problem. Trail etiquette is needed.
- Negative effects of E-bikes on wildlife
- A potential for more trash on trails if E-bikes are allowed
- Speed and impact of more E-bike/bikes on horseback riders' safety
- Wildlife being harassed by "motorized vehicles" (E-bikes). Trails closed to motorized vehicles should remain closed to E-bikes. DNR and WDFW should the impact of new technology over snow vehicles as well.
- Horseback riders and E-bikes together on narrow trails
- E-bikes can cheapen the experience for other mountain bikers who work hard to access/ride trails
- The number of users
- More people in remote areas due to E-bike access
- Modification to E-bikes that are more powerful than the 750w limit designated in state law

Attendance

In total, 137 people attended meeting two including the following agency and facilitation team staff.

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

- Heide Andersen, Recreation Planner
- Eryn Couch, Communications Manager
- Robert Wingard, Private Lands Biologist

Washington Department of Natural Resources

- Andrea Martin, Statewide Recreation Manager
- Sam Hensold, Acting Statewide Recreation Manager

Triangle Associates (Facilitation Team)

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

E-Bike Town Hall: 5/18/22

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?

ADA placed officers should be allowed to use e-bikes on trails.	use e-bikes on trails. ADA placed officers should be allowed to use e-bikes on trails.	Should not be allowed on non-motorized trails. ADA placed officers should be allowed to use e-bikes on trails.	Under 20 miles per hour on dirt trails is safer (-1)	Separate trails per use could be helpful	Creeping on motorized trails. ADA placed officers should be allowed to use e-bikes on trails.	Who would patrol speed limits and e-bike class rules?	It is hard to go even 10 mph uphill on an e-bike.
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2) Which of the three classes may be allowable if any or all?

No. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100	Class 1 only to limit trail impact.	Class 1 Throttle element is concerning.
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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?

Greater access to trails. ADA placed officers should be allowed to use e-bikes on trails.	Appreciation leads to engagement in trail maintenance.	E-bikes lower barriers to entry for those wanting to experience the outdoors for the first time.	Audio impacts to nature are minimal but e-bikes are quiet.	Non-motorized users can go 20 mph on closed roads. Horses are also capable of going very fast.
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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?

any trail is open to non-motorized bikes should be open to e-bikes.	shouldn't be allowed due to effect on wildlife.	consideration of safety very important.	none - motor is a motor.	shouldn't be allowed, only exception is for ADA placarded users.
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2) Which of the three classes may be allowable if any or all?

In favor of class 1	no class of e-bikes not clear is what is safe and all regulations.	class 1 on trails that allow mountain bikes.	class 2 and 3 should be treated as a motorized vehicle.	class 1 and 2 (x2)	not class 2 or 3	e-bikes with throttle can cause issues	class 1 should be allowed, start with that, see how it goes.
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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?

good trail etiquette carries over from motorized bikes to e-bikes.	allowing e-bikes on all trails makes enforcement easier.	economic benefits.	e-bikes have a lot of users, coming from room to others.	hard to enforce e-bikes on what trails DNR and WDFW have to enforce.	use in general of trails has increased 200K.	should have more management and enforcement of under-maintained areas.	e-bikes enable people to see public lands, enjoy trails, and have fun.	e-bikes can't respect each user group and each user's use.
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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?

accessibility for users of different abilities - seeing me as a leg.	continue to work to get outdoors at 1 get older, helps with climate.	access for people with disabilities.	sticker for people with disabilities.	maybe some trails, just for e-bikes, others for pedal and other users.	public access.	if bikes allowed e-bikes should be allowed.	enjoy biking on closed roads and motorized trails.
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2) Which of the three classes may be allowable, if any?

class 1 and 3 on all non-motorized trails.	none - because they are motorized.	none.	Class 1 and 3 anywhere pedal bikes allowed.	if you have to pedal - allowed where pedal allowed (1, 2, 3).	all non-motorized trails - all 3 classes get access for disabled users.	class 1 but not others.	all 3, I have class 2 bike.
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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?

Individual behavior - not about the equipment or trail.	regulations consider electric assist equivalent to pedal bikes.	if a user has a disability, a wheelchair would be more appropriate than a bicycle.	trail damage - weight.	considerate trail sharing.	speed is a problem when it comes to overtaking pedal bikes (e-bike).	chairs on trail - users carrying equipment on e-bikes would be great.	speed, spooking horses, accidents on trails.	speed limit, 15 mph.	lots of trail, trails that cross between, crossing when it is a change.	it's not each other, we'll have fun out there.
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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?

No issues on 2 track.	WDFW have already done a lot of work to make trails accessible.	Clearly mark trails for points for access.	Anywhere a bike is allowed, an e-bike should be allowed (all 3).	Equivalent to a trail with no shared equipment (e-bikes, mountain bikes, etc).	Anywhere e-bikes can go, e-bikes should be allowed to go.	Patience - Hunter FE group, e-bikes should be allowed to go anywhere a bike can.	More regulations.	E-bikes allowed on roads, 1 seat - no should be subject to speed limit.	search and rescue.
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2) Which of the three classes may be allowable if any or all?

Class 3 not necessary because the speed.	Good to limit beyond class 3.	No difference in classes (don't accelerate differently).	Class 1/3 allowed **	Most mid drive bikes could be class 1 or 3.	if you have an e-bike with a throttle, you can go faster than a pedal bike.	Different speeds down/up.	Class 1, 2, 3 okay and what if you have one functioning in the class 2 or 3 option.
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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?

Quantity of users.	Maintain enjoyable experience.	How to regulate what an e-bike can do can be challenging.	Proper signage ***	How to regulate what an e-bike can do can be challenging.	Policing.	Outreach for user etiquette.	Throttling.	Speed.
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Appendix: