ELECTRIC MOUNTAIN BIKES
A playbook to advocate for better trail access
This playbook shows you how.

If enough electric mountain bike riders speak up with a unified voice in support of improved access for Class 1 eMTBs on non-motorized trails, land managers will listen. With the right research, tools, and bootstrapping, you can:

» Raise awareness for Class 1 eMTBs

» Show land managers and advocates that there is a growing contingent of eMTB riders

» Advocate for better access on a trail-by-trail basis

» Share the many tools and resources available to manage eMTBs
STATE AND LOCAL LAWS:
» Many states and local agencies don’t have clear definitions or rules for e-bikes, and Class 1 eMTB access varies greatly.
» Agencies generally either provide access to Class 1 eMTBs where bicycles are allowed, or only allow eMTBs on existing motorized trails.
» Some are reviewing their existing policies or crafting new regulations that clarify where Class 1 eMTBs are allowed.
» State and local municipalities have more flexibility in their trail designations than federal land management agencies, and could be optimal “test” areas for progressive Class 1 eMTB access or a pilot project.

FEDERAL LAWS:
» On federal lands managed for recreation – in this case, lands managed by the U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management – Class 1 eMTBs are considered motorized vehicles and have access to motorized trails, roads, and double tracks.

Private Lands:
» On private lands (e.g. some mountain resorts), the landowner can decide who and what has access to the trail system.

Do not ride your eMTB in areas where the local land rules are unclear. Ride legally and only on authorized trails to show that mountain bikers are all responsible users.

Electric Bike Classes
In many states, e-bikes are regulated like bicycles, and for on-road use, the same rules of the road apply to both e-bikes and human-powered bicycles. The bike industry has defined three classes of e-bikes to help identify the different kinds of e-bikes on the market:

» CLASS 1: Bicycle equipped with a motor that provides assistance only when the rider is pedaling, and that ceases to provide assistance when the e-bike reaches 20 mph (this is not an average speed, but the maximum motor-assisted speed).
» CLASS 2: Bicycle equipped with a throttle-actuated motor, that ceases to provide assistance when the e-bike reaches 20 mph.

» CLASS 3: Bicycle equipped with a motor that provides assistance only when the rider is pedaling, and that ceases to provide assistance when the e-bike reaches 28 mph.
» For the purpose of eMTB advocacy, Class 1 e-bikes are in play because they are the most similar to traditional bicycles.

Find more e-bike resources at peopleforbikes.org/e-bikes
STEP 2: IDENTIFY PRIORITY TRAILS AND REACH OUT

Understand eMTB access in your area.

» Check out an area map and determine who manages the public lands around you.

» Get a sense of where traditional mountain bikes and Class 1 eMTBs are allowed with the PeopleForBikes.org/eMTB map, your local state guide, and the state policy inventory.

» Call your local land management agency (for example, City or County Parks and Recreation Department, State Department of Parks and Recreation, State Parks Department, etc.) to confirm your research. In many cases, the agency might not have a clear answer or policy, and would default to “e-bikes are motorized vehicles.”

» Review the land use designation processes (travel management plan, trail study processes, etc.) and understand how and when trail access can be modified. For example, can a rule be easily adjusted? Can the policy be interpreted to allow Class 1 eMTBs? Does the agency guidance need to be modified? When is the next trail planning process?

» Identify a few trail routes in the area where you’d like to propose that Class 1 eMTBs be allowed either through a pilot project or trial period, or through a new trail designation.

Consult with your partners.

» Schedule a meeting with your local land management agency and mountain bike advocacy group. Explain what Class 1 eMTBs are, who uses them, how they’re used, and how they can help enhance the area’s recreation opportunities. Refer to the talking points in this playbook.

» Come with an understanding of the local land use regulations (or at least plenty of questions) and a map with your identified trail routes.

» Supply a winning case study. For example, Colorado State Parks allows eMTBs on all trails that are open to traditional bicycles because they have not provided increased management challenges to date. In Hood River, Oregon, the Hood River County Forest Recreation Trail Committee allows eMTB access to the Post Canyon trails within the Hood River County Tree Farm trail system, considering that eMTBs have no emissions, no noise, and a pedal assist that creates similar impacts to traditional mountain bikes.

» Arrange a demo for land managers through your local retailer.

» Work with the land manager to address concerns about eMTBs, but express that a growing constituency of Class 1 eMTBers would like to see better access.

» Propose a pilot project that could familiarize land managers with the potential of Class 1 eMTBs, evaluate the response of all trail users, and provide scenarios of how to manage Class 1 eMTB use on public lands.

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STEP 3: FOLLOW UP

Follow up and let us know what’s out there.

» Send the land manager a thank you note and any resources they might have asked for.

» Now that you understand the process, keep tabs on the agency processes and continue to respectfully advocate for trails.

» Catalogue where you can currently ride — send us your info by visiting PeopleForBikes.org/eMTB.

» Contact PeopleForBikes if you know of a land manager doing great things for Class 1 eMTB access.

RESOURCES

The Bicycle Product Suppliers Association and PeopleForBikes are partnering with state and federal land management agencies to determine proper access guidelines and best management practices for e-bikes.

PeopleForBikes.org/e-bikes has many helpful resources, including:

» The Class 1 eMTB law in your state

» An interactive map with great rides across the U.S.

» eMTB Adventures

» Studies and research

» Land manager resources and management handbooks

Need help figuring out who manages the land in your area or who the right contact is? How to read local regulations or be part of the process? Where to find a retailer who can arrange a demo? Contact us and we’ll help.

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WHAT ARE CLASS 1 eMTBs?
» Class 1 eMTBs are like traditional bicycles with fully operable pedals, but with a small motor that will only engage if the rider is pedaling.
» E-bikes are emissions-free, low impact, and operate silently.
» E-bikes are not motorized vehicles like gas-powered vehicles.
» E-bikes are as safe, stable, and sturdy as traditional bicycles and move at bike-like speeds. Many models offer the same qualities of suspension and responsiveness that traditional mountain bikes provide.

WHAT PHYSICAL IMPACTS DO CLASS 1 eMTBs HAVE?
» Class 1 eMTBs have been shown to have similar impacts to natural surface trails as traditional mountain bikes.

WHAT SOCIAL IMPACTS DO CLASS 1 eMTBs HAVE?
» Trail users and land managers are generally concerned with trail crowding and congestion, user conflict, speed and safety, and behavior and enforcement.
» The social impacts of eMTBs are still being studied, although these concerns would exist with or without eMTB access.
» With careful planning, user education, and flexibility, Class 1 eMTBs have a place on public lands.
» In small studies, users did not know they were sharing the trail with eMTBs even though eMTBs were on the trail they had been using.

HOW CAN RANGERS IDENTIFY A CLASS 1 eMTB?
» The law requires that all e-bike manufacturers apply a standard label to each e-bike specifying its class and wattage. This helps agencies identify e-bikes and where they’re allowed.

Find more e-bike resources at peopleforbikes.org/e-bikes
CLASS 1 eMTBs CAN:

» Allow increased access to the outdoors for riders or varying skill levels.

» Help people of different skill levels ride together.

» Address the challenges of local air quality, climate change, obesity, and lack of physical activity.

» Allow people to bicycle when they would not otherwise due to physical fitness, age, disability, or inconvenience.

» Reduce greenhouse gas emissions and fossil fuel consumption, improve air quality, and support alternative modes of transportation.

FOR PARKS, CLASS 1 eMTBs CAN:

» Meet many stated park goals or mandates.

» Bring innovation to a park’s fleet and support alternative modes of staff transportation.

» Carry up to 400 lbs. of cargo and be equipped with built-in hauling features, specialty baskets, versatile racks, carrying bags, and other accessories to accomplish many maintenance and enforcement needs.

» Provide a new option for staff who want to use a bicycle but would otherwise not because of physical limitations.

ARE CLASS 1 eMTBs SAFE?

» E-bikes offer the pleasure and freedom of bicycling with no known compromise in consumer safety.

» The average Class 1 eMTB rider is no faster than the fastest mountain biker.

» The maximum power of Class 1 eMTBs does not exceed the maximum power output of human capability.

» E-bikes in fact increase road safety with more cyclists on the road and reduce demand for parking spaces.

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