

**POLICY OFFICE**

**DRAFT E-bike Policy: Frequently Asked Questions**

Dated 7/21/2022

**Q. What is an E-bike?**

A. An e-bike (also electric bike or pedalcycle with electric assist) is defined in the Pennsylvania Vehicle Code ([75 Pa. C.S. § 102](#)) as a “vehicle weighing not more than 100 pounds with two or three wheels more than 11 inches in diameter, manufactured or assembled with an electric motor system rated at not more than 750 watts and equipped with operable pedals and capable of a speed not more than 20 miles per hour on a level surface when powered by the motor source only.”

**Q. Will DCNR’s new policy allow all three classifications of e-bikes on its lands?**

A. Generally, yes. The Department generally permits pedalcycles and pedalcycles with electric assist (as defined by the Pennsylvania Vehicle Code) on DCNR trails already open to traditional bike usage as long as they comply with the policy criteria. The policy states that E-bikes will be treated equally to human-powered bikes by department staff, provided they:

- weigh no more than 100 pounds;
- do not exceed 20 mph using the motor functionality;
- are equipped with a motor no more than 750 watts; and
- are equipped with fully functional, operable pedals.

Regardless of the classification, if the pedalcycle meets the criterion set forth above, pedalcycles and pedalcycles with electric assist are allowed on DCNR managed roads and trails.

**Q. Where can e-bikes be ridden on DCNR lands?**

A. E-bikes, as defined above, are permitted on DCNR-managed trails and public-use roads where traditional, human-powered pedalcycles are allowed. E-bikes are prohibited where traditional, human-powered pedalcycles are prohibited. While most state forest trails and roads are open to this activity, trails that are not open to biking include:

- Natural areas (where no biking is permitted)
- Designated hiking trails (blazed with yellow or orange)
- Trails specifically marked closed to biking

**Q. Are e-bikes allowed on DCNR’s non-motorized trails?**

A. Yes. E-bikes are human-powered vehicles and are permitted on DCNR-managed trails where traditional, human-powered pedalcycles are allowed. To maintain the integrity and necessary safety protocols along nonmotorized trails, e-bike operators will be required to use only human



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power or pedal-assist power (motor assistance while pedaling) to operate e-bikes on trails designated for non-motorized use. Using the electric motor exclusively to move an e-bike for an extended period of time without pedaling is prohibited on non-motorized trails. In addition, e-bike operators shall adhere to advised speed limits along trails and not exceed 20 miles per hour with assistance from the motor.

#### **Q. Are e-bikes allowed on DCNR's motorized trails?**

A. Generally yes, unless otherwise marked as closed to pedalcycles.

#### **Q. Are e-bikes permitted on public use roads managed by DCNR?**

A. Yes. E-bikes are generally permitted on public-use roads within state park and forests, unless otherwise marked as prohibited.

#### **Q. Why doesn't DCNR's policy utilize or distinguish between the three classifications of e-bikes?**

Pennsylvania's Vehicle Code currently does not include classifications for e-bikes. Because the classifications are not codified in Pennsylvania, regulating such devices can be challenging. For example, labeling of e-bikes sold in Pennsylvania is neither standardized nor mandated. Additionally, as the industry evolves, e-bikes are being sold across classifications (meaning, a single device may qualify as multiple classifications). Consumers can also purchase conversion kits that allow for transforming traditional bikes to e-bikes or upgrading an e-bike to another classification. It's difficult for DCNR rangers to identify between the three classifications. Therefore, DCNR's policy is focused on managing behavior, not devices.

#### **Q. Why is DCNR updating its policy now?**

A. E-bikes offer the public opportunities to expand their outdoor recreational access and can even serve as a primary mode of transportation for those interested in a healthier, more environmentally-friendly lifestyle. This policy seeks to improve accessibility of Pennsylvania's state parks and forests through healthful active transportation for all Pennsylvanians and support's the agency's overall goal to promote "Recreation for All".

#### **Q. Does Pennsylvania require a license to operate e-bikes (as defined in the Vehicle Code)?**

A. No. However, users should review the Pennsylvania's Vehicle Code regarding specific specifications and understand current laws and regulations.

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**Q. Are e-bikes considered motor vehicles?**

A. Pedalcycles with electric assist are classified as bicycles and considered primarily human-powered with electric propulsion assistance. The Vehicle Code states that a pedalcycle is “a vehicle propelled solely by human-powered pedals or a pedalcycle with electric assist.” DCNR will regulate pedalcycles with electric assist the same as traditional pedalcycles.

**Q. My e-bike has a wattage and/or weight that exceeds the provisions in the Vehicle Code. Is my device permitted on DCNR lands?**

A. Pedalcycles that exceed the weight, wattage, or other specifications identified in the policy are prohibited on DCNR trails. Generally, vehicles permitted on public roads, per the Vehicle Code, are permitted on DCNR’s public use roads. Users should review the Pennsylvania’s Vehicle Code and DCNR regulations to ensure they are following applicable laws and regulations.

**Q. What is the difference between pedal-assist and full throttle?**

A. Pedal-assist offers motor assistance up to a certain max speed (depending on your device) while pedaling. The throttle offers full motor assistance up to a max speed without the use of the pedals.

**Q. Is a Motorized Pedalcycle, as defined in the Vehicle Code, an e-bike?**

A. No. Pennsylvania’s Vehicle Code (75 Pa. C.S. § 102) defines Motorized Pedalcycle (“moped”) as a motor-driven cycle equipped with operable pedals, a motor rated no more than 1.5 brake horsepower, a cylinder capacity not exceeding 50 cubic centimeters, an automatic transmission, and a maximum design speed of no more than 25 miles per hour or an electric motor-driven cycle equipped with operable pedals and an automatic transmission powered by an electric battery or battery pack-powered electric motor with a maximum design speed of no more than 25 miles per hour. These vehicles are not considered pedalcycles or pedalcycles with electric assist and therefore not permitted on DCNR trails. See PennDOT’s [Fact Sheet: Mopeds, Motor-Driven Cycles and Motorcycles](#) and [PA Micromobility Fact Sheet](#) for more information.

**Q. How do I determine the wattage of my e-bike?**

A. Check with the manufacturer to determine the wattage. You can also calculate the wattage by multiplying the voltage of the battery by the peak current limit (amps).



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#### **Q. Are there age requirements for operating an e-bike?**

A. According to Pennsylvania's Vehicle Code ([75 Pa. C.S. § 3514](#)), no person under 16 years of age shall operate a pedalcycle with electric assist.

#### **Q. Does DCNR require bicycle helmets?**

A. Pennsylvania law requires helmets be worn by any persons under the age of 12. This applies to the person operating the bicycle and any passengers or persons riding in an attached trailer or seat. Although the bicycle helmet law only applies to riders under the age of 12, the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT), National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), and Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) as well as other experts recommend that bicyclists of all ages wear helmets as they are the most effective way to reduce incidents of injury and/or death in bicycle accidents.

#### **Q. How do I monitor my speed?**

A. Most e-bikes are equipped with or can be equipped with speedometers. Users are responsible for maintaining safe speeds on trails and roads at all times. The policy also states that users may not exceed 20 miles per hour while using the motor functionality.

#### **Q. How will DCNR manage trails to accommodate increased usage and different types of recreational users?**

A. The Department will evaluate usage of e-bikes on forest and park lands and actively work to mitigate adverse effects particularly in regards to public safety and resource protection. The Department reserves the authority to limit the use of e-bikes on specific trails or portions of trails if deemed necessary for public safety, resource management, and other operational considerations.

#### **Q. How will DCNR enforce this policy?**

A. DCNR will work with user and trail groups and the industry to educate the public on the new policy. DCNR is focused on managing behavior from a safety perspective while enhancing outdoor opportunities and experiences that welcome a wide variety of recreational users. DCNR will use its public outreach tools, including social media, e-newsletters, website, and signage (as needed), to educate the public and advance safety protocols. DCNR rangers have the authority to cite users who are creating unsafe trail conditions or causing unwarranted damage to the resource.



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#### **Q. Where can I charge my e-bike?**

A. It is important for users to be aware of battery storage capacity of their e-bike and available charging options. Users should not assume that trails open to e-bikes include e-bike charging stations.

#### **Q. How do I comment on the draft e-bike policy?**

A. DCNR welcomes the public's comments regarding the draft e-bike policy and will provide a comment period to provide feedback. Please submit your comments to [RA-NR\\_PolicyOffice@pa.gov](mailto:RA-NR_PolicyOffice@pa.gov) by August 31, 2022.

#### **Q. What is the effective date of the new policy?**

A. Following the comment period, ending August 31<sup>st</sup>, and upon reviewing the public's feedback, DCNR will finalize the policy. Once the policy is signed by the Secretary, it will take effect immediately and the public will be notified.