

Mountain bikers want access to wilderness

By Vernon Felton, Outside

Since 1984, mountain bikes have been banned from all Wilderness areas. That, however, might change soon.

The Human-Powered Wildlands Travel Management Act of 2015, a potential piece of legislation seeking to reverse that prohibition, has begun its journey on Capitol Hill, and, although the draft has yet to gain an official sponsor, it's already sparking controversy over who should and shouldn't be allowed in America's most pristine places.

Mountain biking was in its infancy, back in 1984, when the U.S. Forest Service revised its regulations, banning not only motorized transportation in Wilderness areas, but also "mechanical transport," a move that has since made mountain bikers persona non grata on nearly 110 million acres of Wilderness.

Opponents of the ban point out that no studies of mountain biking's environmental impact were conducted at the time and that several independent studies since then have shown that mountain bikers have about the same impact on trails as hikers and less than equestrians—a group that enjoys largely unfettered access to wilderness.

Read the whole story