

**From:** [Jared Oakleaf](#)  
**To:** [FS-travel-comments-rocky-mountain-shoshone](#)  
**Subject:** Proposed route WK-01  
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I have grown up hunting elk on the Washakie Ranger district. The Cony Basin and Mount Arter areas provide a great off the beaten path hunting experience. Day hunts into this region are fantastic. While not Wilderness, it is a back country hunting experience that is vital to provide quality hunting and elk escape cover.

Putting an ATV trail through this basin is a mistake. Please consider the impacts this will have on elk escape cover and back country hunting experiences.

The elk in the region are showing signs that they are avoiding human pressure by heading to lower private lands. The herds that now frequent the North Fork River and the Double A Ranch are a clear example. Punching a motorized trail through Cony Basin will compound this issue further. Escape cover has to be maintained in country that the elk use, to assume that the wilderness provides adequate escape cover is a mistake. The Elk hang in the Wilderness in the summer and early fall, as soon as the grass cures they begin to head for lower habitats, but always seek habitats away from roads.

The hunting experience on the Washakie Ranger District is heavily influenced by motorized vehicles. As such, the elk are forced into the remaining roadless pockets and those of us who are willing to follow have fantastic hunting. These roadless pockets are not Wilderness but instead comprise edge habitats and security cover that are vital for the lifecycles of wildlife. Several of these places can be reached by the day hunter, some require a short overnight trip. Needless to say this back country hunting experience is in short supply and is being further eroded by illegal vehicle use.

It is a mistake to assume that this trail will receive light and infrequent use as the amount of people who now have these vehicles is staggering compared to even 10 years ago. If the Shoshone Lake Road is any indication, the level of use that will occur on this motorized trail will be intense. The desire to go to the lake and make a loop out of it is strong, not to mention the ever increasing popularity of hunting from a motorized vehicle. This trail and the loop it creates will convert a rare back country hunting experience into an experience mirroring a NASCAR event which is an experience that is exist throughout the district.

Thank You,  
Jared Oakleaf  
Hunter and lifelong Fremont County Resident