

**From:** [Patrick Lang](#)  
**To:** [FS-travel-comments-rocky-mountain-shoshone](#)  
**Subject:** WR-26 for FR-501: Comments and Suggestions  
**Date:** Tuesday, July 26, 2016 5:19:00 PM

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My name is Pat Lang. [REDACTED] I visit Wyoming as often as possible. It's an awesome state and I love it there.

I would like to make 3 comments and 2 suggestions regarding the proposed change WR-26.

Here's how I understanding the current proposal:

- Proposal: convert a section of FSR 501 to allow use only by vehicles with a width less than 65 inches (i.e. ATVs).
- Current Status: Currently the road is open to all vehicles
- Reasoning: Reduce impact on riparian and wetland areas
- Assumption: Lighter vehicles will do less damage

### **COMMENTS**

I would like to test the assumption that lighter vehicles will have less of an impact.

Is there field research that confirms this? For sure, a lighter vehicle, when *all other things held equal*, will have less of an impact on the terrain. But all things are not equal between full sized vehicles and ATVs.

Please consider...

1. ATVs result in more vehicle trips to move the same amount of people and gear
  - a. Most ATVs only hold one person. Example, **one** SUV or pickup truck can transport **four** or more people, while doing the same with ATVs would require **four** or more separate vehicles.
  - b. From a commercial and load hauling standpoint, ATVs cannot carry as much cargo as a full sized vehicle. Commercial users (such as outfitters) and heavy equipment recreation users (such as hunters) will require more trips to move same amount of equipment and goods.
2. ATVs result in more tracks than full size vehicles, leading to braided trails and more damage to riparian areas.
  - a. More trips (as illustrated above) lead to more tracks
  - b. More riders, and the individuality that ATVs provide, lead to each user taking slightly...sometime dramatically...different tracks on the same trail
  - c. Because ATVs are capable of going just about anywhere (they are indeed amazing machines), the urge (and tendency, in my unfortunate observation) for less principled riders to go off trail is much higher.
3. ATVs have smaller wheels, and smaller wheels do more riparian damage.
  - a. Smaller wheels have higher torque and RPM.

b. The larger, wider tires of standard vehicles roll over the terrain with much less wear on the road and terrain. The smaller tires of ATVs, which tend to roll **into and out of**, rather than **over**, depressions in the terrain, lead to more erosion and riparian damage.

c. Smaller tires sink into the mud of riparian areas more. This is why construction, off-road and agricultural vehicles have big, not small tires.,

Without field research showing that ATV wear and tear is less than that of Truck/SUV on roads and riparian areas, I am skeptical that the proposed remedy will have a net positive impact.

## **SUGGESTIONS**

1. Focus on the road conditions: consider seasonal restrictions

a. Most damage in riparian areas occurs when the area is wet. Limiting travel during these conditions will greatly reduce road and riparian damage.

b. In Oregon, many of the areas I frequent (the Crooked River National Grasslands and Steens Mountain, for example) close many roads in the wet season when most road damage occurs. It is amazing how much damage can occur on wet, muddy terrain with one drive through from a small vehicle like an ATV.

2. Don't impact local businesses: make limited exceptions if necessary

a. If you must go forward with the proposed plan, please consider providing access for local businesses that have a legitimate need.

b. I know of at least one outfitter that relies on using this road for their operations. This business brings thousands of dollars of my money into the local economy every few years. A negative impact on this business will ripple through the fragile economy of the area.

c. Allowing a few, responsible businesses access to the area will help them stay solvent and provides easy accountability.

Thank you for your kind consideration.

Regards,

Patrick Lang

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**Patrick Lang**

