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Comments: As a supporter of the basic plan to improve and sustain this section of old highway to non-motorized travel, my only objection is to the provision to close it to such non-motorized use from December 1 to April 30 to allegedly "protect elk winter range."

My objection is based on some 60 years of extensive outdoor experience as a hiker (including on snow shoes), hunter (albeit of "small game"), landowner employing "best conservation practices," and advocate of public access to public lands in a way that is rationally regulated but not over-regulated for the excessive benefit of certain "stakeholders." In this and similar "closures" of public lands to non-motorized, non-hunting uses, the "stakeholders" are an unholy alliance of big game hunters and animal rights activists. I suspect that the big game hunters have the greatest impact on the land use policies of public agencies because of their substantial contribution to the financing of "fish and game" departments through the sale of hunting permits.

While I recognize the ecological and cultural value of regulated hunting of elk, I oppose the bias inherent in issues such as this, that absurdly equates non-motorized use of trails during the winter with open seasons on killing (and maiming) large animals during autumn. Is it fair and rational public policy to be allegedly "protecting" wild animals from non-motorized trail users so that there will allegedly be more of them to be killed and maimed by hunters next autumn?

To the extent that the specific area in question is allegedly "elk winter range," my observation of the "migrations" of elk and deer during the winter are from higher elevations such as this to much lower elevations. What evidence is there that elk actually occupy this area during the winter, or that they are so evolutionarily retarded that they are unable to use the extensive vegetative cover surrounding the old road to avoid being "terrorized" by people simply walking along it?

While some elk may be less "habituated" than others to living in proximity to people, the number that spend the winter in the Roaring Fork valley among developments such as Aspen Glen demonstrates that they are quite capable of co-existing with people, provided that they are protected from hunting and crossing busy highways. That is the type of "protection" that matters -- not "protection" from the public's non-motorized trail use in winter or any other time.