



## **Wildlife Corridors protect animals and humans alike...an important tool for New Mexico**

### **LOOKING AT OUR NATURAL WORLD FROM A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE**

*At New Mexico Wild, we think of New Mexico as a vital set of roadless wilderness areas and the intact lands that surround those special places. But from the perspective of a migrating elk, a brown trout finding a reliable source of food, or a bobcat seeking a mate, our boundaries matter little. Wildlife will go where it needs to go to survive or better yet thrive. I'm delighted to report that the State of New Mexico passed a "Wildlife Corridors Act" this March which seeks to substantially decrease the risks that wildlife take as they move from one place to another. Improving wildlife corridors has a direct human benefit as well, reducing the wildlife-vehicle collisions that are so frequent on the vast highway stretches across our state. We'll be spending more time thinking like an animal on the move over the coming months as we gear up to help the state agencies implement this important new law.*



Mark Allison  
Executive Director

### **PART OF A REMEDY FOR THE HABITAT WE HAVE DAMAGED.**

Wildlife corridors link protected areas together through better coordination between public and private land managers and can reduce barriers to wildlife between these protected areas.

Corridors contribute to sustainable wildlife populations in three ways. First, they allow colonization in new areas when food sources or other natural resources are lacking in their core habitat.

Second, corridors allow seasonal migration away from barriers caused by human development. Finally, corridors promote interbreeding, allowing animals to find new mates in neighboring regions so that genetic diversity can increase.

The values of wildlife corridors are even more important in New Mexico which is at an unusual ecological crossroads. Much of the state is categorized as "New Mexico Highlands" but that designation represents 36 habitat types from Chihuahuan Desert Scrub to Rocky Mountain Alpine Forb Tundra. The north-south linkage between the Gila National Forest in Southern New Mexico and the Rio Grande and San Juan Forests of Southern Colorado are vital to protecting wildlife corridors for many species.

### **THE HUMAN TOLL AND A NEW STATE LAW**

From 2002 to 2016, the New Mexico Department of Transportation reported 15,213 animal-vehicle collisions with 738 resulting in serious injury or death of a motorist. Deer, elk, pronghorn, and bear accounted for 75% of these collisions in New Mexico. Across the United States, it is estimated that about 1 million animals are killed by motorists ever day.

New Mexico recently passed a "Wildlife Corridors Act" to begin to address this challenge. The Act calls for the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish and the Department of Transportation to develop a Wildlife Corridors Action Plan. The plan will identify key roads and other barriers impacting wildlife movement and migration and create a list of priority projects designed to improve and protect such corridors. New Mexico Wild played an important role in getting this legislation passed and will play a key role as future plans are developed.

## WHAT NEW MEXICO WILD CAN DO TO CREATE THE MOST POSITIVE IMPACT WITH THE NEW WILDLIFE CORRIDORS ACT

We believe that non-governmental organizations such as New Mexico Wild play an important role in assuring that the greatest value is realized from the new Act. First of all, continuing our core work to keep wilderness areas and potential wilderness areas roadless is essential. New Mexico Wild and partners can assist with identifying existing highway crossings, dams, fencing, and other barriers that negatively impact the natural migration of wildlife. We can help mobilize the best available science and encourage collaboration between tribal and federal land managers and industry when possible. Each of the Wildlife Corridor Action Plans will have public hearings for input. As we do with so many of these hearings affecting wildlands, wildlife,

and water, we can help assure voices for conservation are engaged in those sessions.

We recently launched a *Wildlife Corridors Campaign* to help fund our work in this important area. Over the coming year, we hope to raise \$155,000 for this effort. This would include using our statewide grassroots network to build support in local communities and with diverse coalitions.

If you would like to see the recently passed Wildlife Corridor Act, a report on wildlife corridors done with our partner, The Wildland Project, or the fundraising campaign for this work, please visit our website:

[nmwild.org/our-work/corridors](http://nmwild.org/our-work/corridors)

More than 16 years ago, New Mexico Wild and its partner, the Wildland Project, completed a study of wildlife corridor challenges and opportunities in New Mexico. The table below represents some of that work. We've been engaged in this wildlife corridor work for a long time but patience has paid off. We expect substantial progress on this in the coming few years.

**Table 9.1 Priority barriers for mitigation initiatives to restore connectivity**

* PRIORITY BARRIERS	Large Mammals Affected	Issues/Comments (based on fieldwork & roadkill data)	Recommendations (based on data, workshops & consultation)
I-25 @ RATON PASS (Vermejo>Johnson Mesa)	black bear, mountain lion, bobcat, deer, elk	Highway has no apparent crossing structures; impermeable, evidenced by high roadkill incidence	Field research is needed; possible site for overpasses and other mitigation strategies
I-25 @ GLORIETA (Glorieta Mesa >Pecos)	black bear, mountain lion, bobcat, deer, elk	Railroad, highway, fencing & development; high road kill numbers; documented use of culverts by wildlife	Further field research; improve fencing to funnel wildlife under highway; enlarge culverts and possible site for an overpass
I-25@ Bosque (Bosque NWR> Chupadera Mtns.)	deer, mountain lion	Sightings of mountain lions where Chupadera Mtns. meet highway. This crossing forms a natural corridor down to Rio Grande River Valley/ Bosque.	Further field research is needed; enlarge culverts and improve fencing to funnel wildlife under highway.
I-25 @ LA BAJADA (Ortiz>Jemez Mtns.)	black bear, mountain lion, deer	Site of 2 mountain lion roadkills and at least 1 black bear; lack of underpasses/culverts may be a problem	Further field research is needed to determine mitigation strategy
I-25 @ HATCH (Caballo> Lake Valley/ Las Uvas Mtns.)	deer, mountain lion	Several sites of high roadkill incidence, south of Caballo Reservoir and north of Hatch	Field research is needed to determine mitigation strategy; enlarge culverts and improve fencing to funnel wildlife under highway
I-40 @ GRANTS (El Malpais >Mt.Taylor)	elk, mountain lion	Development, fencing, highway and railroad impede connectivity; documented elk migration corridor	Enlarge culverts and improve fencing to funnel wildlife under highway
I-40 @ TIJERAS CYN. (Sandia>Manzano Mtns.)	black bear, mountain lion, bobcat, deer	Development, highway and lack of viable underpasses impede movement; documented black bear and mountain lion roadkill	Enlarge culverts and improve fencing to funnel wildlife under highway; possible site for an overpass
HWY 60 @ ABO PASS (Manzano>Los Pios Mtns.)	bighorn sheep, mountain lion	Railroad is a documented cause of mortality for bighorn sheep and cattle	Determine appropriate mitigation strategies, such as noise maker for quiet trains, possible site for an overpass
US 70 @ ORGAN PASS (San Andreas>Organ Mtns.)	mountain lion, black bear, bighorn sheep, deer	Widening of this highway has been documented to be a barrier for mountain lion and bighorn sheep; high roadkill incidence	Further field research is needed to determine mitigation strategy; possible site for an overpass
US 70 @ Lincoln NF	black bear, mountain lion, elk, deer, hognose skunk	Highway is being widened in sections; high roadkill incidence along entire length; NMDG&F working on mitigation for deer/vehicle accidents in Hondo Valley area	Further research needed to determine focus areas and mitigation strategies
US 82 @ Lincoln NF	black bear, mountain lion, elk, deer	High roadkill incidence along entire length	Further research is needed to determine focus areas and mitigation strategies
US 54 (From Carizozo to Vaughn)	deer	High deer/vehicle accident incidence; NMDG&F proposes enlarged underpasses & deer fencing at 2 sites	Implementation of proposal and monitor success
HWY 550 (Animas River Bridge to Colorado Border)	deer	High deer/vehicle accident incidence; NMSH&TD has put up 3 miles of deer fencing with deer gates & 3 enlarged underpasses	Monitor success
HWY 180 & 52 (Blue Range>Gila)	Mexican wolf, black bear, mountain lion, deer, elk	Several sites of high roadkill incidence; near Reserve, Blue Range Wilderness, Greenwood Canyon, Little Burro Mtns.	Further research needed to determine focus areas and mitigation strategies
HWY 90 (Burro Mtns.)	Mexican wolf, black bear, mountain lion, deer, elk	High roadkill incidence along section in Grant County	Further research needed to determine focus areas and mitigation strategies

\* not listed in order of priority

Please help us continue the work to protect wilderness, wildlife and water in beautiful New Mexico. Use the enclosed form to donate.

*New Mexico Wilderness Alliance*

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