

A statement from: Wildlands Network, Center for Large Landscape Conservation, Defenders of Wildlife, Endangered Species Coalition, Humane Society Legislative Fund, International Fund for Animal Welfare, National Parks Conservation Association, Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative

Conservation Groups Applaud Inclusion of Wildlife Crossings in INVEST Act

Provisions will protect wildlife and motorists while creating jobs

WASHINGTON, D.C. (June 19, 2020) — Yesterday, the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure included dedicated funding in H.R. 2, the INVEST in America Act, to support state, tribal and federal efforts to reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions, making America's roads safer for both motorists and wildlife. Notably, the committee included \$75 million per year for states to reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions through wildlife mitigation measures including construction of wildlife over passes and underpasses, and more.

As conservation organizations representing citizens across the United States, we praise the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, its Chairman Peter DeFazio, and Representative Jared Huffman for their leadership in protecting human and wildlife safety while rebuilding highway infrastructure and supporting state and local jobs. Reported collisions between motorists and wildlife cause more than 200 human fatalities and over 26,000 injuries each year, costing Americans more than \$8 billion annually. In addition to human casualties, an estimated 1-2 million large animals are killed by vehicle collisions every year. Numerous research studies show wildlife crossing structures that guide animals over or under our nation's roadways are highly effective, reducing wildlife-vehicle collisions by up to 97%. Furthermore, wildlife crossing construction as found in H.R. 2 supports more resilient landscapes by allowing wildlife to move, particularly in the face of climate change.

Several states have recently introduced or passed wildlife crossing legislation (including Florida, Wyoming, Mississippi, New Hampshire, Oregon, New Mexico and Virginia). This dedicated federal funding will support needed projects in these states, and more. A list of projects that could benefit from this funding can be found [here](#).

In April 2020 Chairman DeFazio stated, "we've got to rebuild our infrastructure, let's rebuild it in a way that is resilient for severe climate events." ... "If you've got to rebuild it, rebuild it the right way."

Wildlife corridor protection and crossing construction are the right way to rebuild America's roads and protect people and wildlife and we thank him for his dedication to safeguarding people and wildlife.

Summary of wildlife provisions in H.R. 2

- **\$75 million per year for wildlife crossing projects** from the National Highway Performance Program.
- Inclusion of wildlife-vehicle collision reduction as an **eligible project under a variety of program areas**.
- Updating and expanding the **'Wildlife Vehicle Collision Reduction Study: 2008 Report to Congress'** and accompanying 'Best Practices Manual' including, assessing the causes of and recommending solutions for reducing WVCs.
- Guidance for **voluntary joint statewide transportation and wildlife action plans** aimed at addressing WVCs and improving habitat connectivity.
- **Workforce development and technical training** courses aimed at reducing WVCs and improving habitat connectivity, to be made available to transportation and fish and wildlife professionals.
- **Development of a standardized data methodology** for collecting and reporting spatially accurate **crash and carcass data**, as practicable given technology and cost, with the goal of developing a standardized data template that can be **voluntarily implemented by states**.
- **Establishment of voluntary guidance** that includes a threshold for determining whether a highway should be evaluated for potential mitigation measures to reduce WVCs and improve aquatic and terrestrial habitat connectivity.

Contacts

Susan Holmes

Federal Policy Director, Wildlands Network

susan@wildlandsnetwork.org

202-329-1553

Renee Callahan

Senior Policy Officer, Center for Large Landscape Conservation

renee@largelandscapes.org

406-586-8082

Kati Schmidt

Communications Director, National Parks Conservation Association

kschmidt@npca.org

415-847-1768