THE ISSUE

In Colorado, nearly 4,000 wildlife vehicle collisions (WVC) are reported each year, though it's estimated that a more accurate figure is 14,100, given the number of unrecorded collisions. These WVCs have tragic consequences, including hundreds of human injuries and some fatalities, as well as the death of thousands of animals on roadways in our state. The annual cost of these devastating accidents is approximately $80 million in property damages, emergency response costs, medical treatments, and other costs. This figure does not include the value of lost wildlife—likely $24 million—or the impact on the health of wildlife populations.

THE SOLUTION

SB22-151 will create the Colorado Wildlife Safe Passages Fund to invest $5 million (as amended in Senate Appropriations Committee on 6/2) of state general funds in measures to reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions and reconnect habitat fragmented by roads. This includes projects identified in Colorado Department of Transportation's 10-year pipeline of 25 projects with wildlife infrastructure components, as well as projects identified by the Colorado Wildlife & Transportation Alliance, state agencies, and county or tribal governments. The fund would also provide a much-needed source of matching funds to leverage myriad federal grant opportunities available in the new infrastructure law.

SUCCESS OF THE WILDLIFE CROSSING PROJECT ON COLORADO STATE HIGHWAY 9

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These kinds of crossing projects have proven highly effective. For example, in 2015 and 2016, Colorado's first two wildlife overpasses, five wildlife underpasses, 10.3 miles of wildlife exclusion fencing, and other mitigation features were constructed on State Highway 9 between Kremmling and Green Mountain Reservoir. These investments resulted in a **92% reduction in reported WVCs** and reconnected habitat for many iconic species, such as deer, elk, pronghorn, moose, sheep, black bear, mountain lion, bobcat, and coyote.[i]

SUPPORTERS OF SB22-151

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[i] Learn more at https://www.codot.gov/programs/research/pdfs/2021/sh9