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Mr. Matthew Fry  
Wyoming Game and Fish Department  
5400 Bishop Blvd.  
Cheyenne, WY 82006

August 28, 2009

Dear Mr. Fry,

I am writing in support of several wildlife connectivity transportation projects that have been proposed by the Wyoming Department of Transportation (WYDOT), in partnership with the Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WGFD), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management and U.S. Forest Service. As Wyoming's oldest statewide conservation organization, the Wyoming Outdoor Council works to protect Wyoming's land, air, water, and wildlife for the benefit of future generations. To fulfill our mission, we often work closely with the WGFD and welcome opportunities to partner with the WGFD and WYDOT to protect our state's migration corridors.

In 2007, recognizing the value of wildlife to western economies and quality of life, the Western Governors' Association issued a policy resolution (07-01) protecting wildlife migration corridors and crucial wildlife habitat in the West. The escalating impacts of global climate change, urbanization, and the need to maintain and expand transportation infrastructure in Wyoming increasingly will affect wildlife movements between crucial seasonal ranges. Intensive energy development in Wyoming and its associated roads, infrastructure, and increased human activity already has eliminated or fragmented many of Wyoming's critical wildlife habitats and migration corridors. In addition, I-80, which bisects Wyoming and is a vital artery in the nation's transportation system, has a continued impact on the state's wildlife, severing crucial habitats and serving as a virtually impassable barrier to wildlife.

According to the U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, an estimated one to two million large animal-vehicle collisions occur each year nationwide at a cost

of approximately 8.4 billion dollars and the loss of hundreds of lives.<sup>1</sup> Such collisions are steadily increasing. Appropriately placed wildlife crossing structures and associated fencing, have been shown to reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions by more than 80%.<sup>1</sup> In Wyoming, WYDOT, the WGFD and other entities recently partnered to create underpasses along Highway 30 near Kemmerer, Wyoming, where 14,000 mule deer cross the highway during the spring and fall migration periods. The resulting underpasses are predicted to save 200-300 deer per year as well as reduce damage and danger to motorists.

WYDOT, the WGFD and their partners have identified four new projects that will significantly decrease wildlife-vehicle collisions in Wyoming. The Trapper Point project will protect a key portion of the longest migratory route in the lower 48 states. Pronghorn and mule deer that migrate along this corridor from Grand Teton National Park to southwest Wyoming must pass through a narrow bottleneck in the Trapper's Point area. Overpasses, underpasses, and associated fencing in this area will not only save wildlife and human lives, but also help to sustain this famed migration route.

The two US-189 projects will help mitigate the impacts of increased traffic associated with intensive energy development and significantly reduce wildlife fatalities as well as damage to vehicles and the potential loss of human lives. Finally, the proposed projects associated with the I-80 corridor will help mitigate the substantial loss of migration corridors that resulted from the construction of I-80. Restoring the connectivity of crucial habitats and allowing wildlife safe passage across this barrier will help restore wildlife migration routes and access to critical seasonal habitats.

By supporting the proposed WYDOT/WGFD projects, TIGER Discretionary Grants would improve Wyoming and the nation's existing transportation infrastructure and the safety of Wyoming's roads, thereby improving the quality of life for Wyoming's communities and the millions of drivers that pass through the state. These projects would create much-needed jobs and boost local economies. Finally, funding these carefully selected projects would restore crucial wildlife migration corridors and protect the associated wildlife resources that are so valued by Wyomingites and visitors to the state.

We sincerely hope that WYDOT, the WGFD, and its partners will be successful in receiving TIGER grant funding for these very important projects and we look forward to future collaboration.

Sincerely,

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<sup>1</sup> Huijser, M.P., P. McGowen, J. Fuller, A. Hardy, A. Kociolek, A.P. Clevenger, D. Smith & R. Ament. 2007. Wildlife-vehicle collision reduction study. Report to congress. U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, Washington D.C., USA.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sophie Osborn', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Sophie Osborn  
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