



Michelle Lujan Grisham, Governor | Justin Reese, Acting Cabinet Secretary | Michael B. Sloane, Director, NMDGF

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Department of Transportation media contact,  
[Marisa.Maez@state.nm.us](mailto:Marisa.Maez@state.nm.us)

Marisa Maez: (505) 269-8243,

Department of Game and Fish media contact,  
[Ryan.Darr@state.nm.us](mailto:Ryan.Darr@state.nm.us)

Ryan Darr: (505) 476-8027,

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE, AUG. 9, 2022:**

## **State agencies join forces to make New Mexico's roads safer**

### **Wildlife Corridors Action Plan now available**

SANTA FE – The New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT) in partnership with the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish (NMDGF) has released the final Wildlife Corridors Action Plan (Plan). The Plan has been prepared to minimize wildlife-vehicle collisions and increase motorist safety in accordance with New Mexico Senate Bill 228, the Wildlife Corridors Act (Act).

The Act, signed into law by New Mexico Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham in 2019, directed the NMDOT and the NMDGF to develop the Plan for NMDOT roads statewide. The Plan identifies wildlife-vehicle collision hotspots that pose a high risk to the traveling public; see map in the Plan linked below. Using ecological data and corridor modeling, it also identifies wildlife corridors that bisect roads, and provides a list of prioritized wildlife-vehicle collision mitigation projects with site-specific, detailed recommendations based on the results of the Plan's analyses.

The Plan focuses primarily on the movements of six large mammals: elk, deer, pronghorn, bighorn sheep, black bear and mountain lion. However, other sensitive species were also considered. A team of national experts led by Daniel B. Stephens and Associates (DBS&A) cooperated with NMDOT and NMDGF to develop the final Plan.

The DBS&A team used a science-driven approach to identify areas per the Act that "pose a risk to successful wildlife migration or that pose a risk to the traveling public." DBS&A's approach incorporated NMDOT crash data, NMDGF wildlife-movement data and other ecological information provided by partners and local contributors. "Developing the Wildlife Corridors Act Plan was truly a cooperative effort that involved

not only working closely with the DBS&A team of nationally recognized experts in the field of highway ecology, but also with tribal wildlife experts, non-profit conservation organizations and local citizen scientists,” stated Mark Watson, terrestrial habitat specialist and Wildlife Corridors Act lead for NMDGF.

The Draft version of the Plan was released in January 2022 and two public meetings were held the following month. After a 60-day comment period, NMDOT, NMDGF and DBS&A reviewed all comments and made edits to the draft Plan accordingly.

The NMDOT and NMDGF will continue to work cooperatively to secure funding for implementation of the Plan’s prioritized wildlife-vehicle collision mitigation projects. Various funding avenues will be pursued including applying for federal grant money, requesting direct allocation from the legislature, and incorporating wildlife-vehicle collision mitigation measures into future NMDOT projects when feasible. Per the Act, an annual report must be submitted to the governor’s office and legislature describing the progress made in Plan implementation. Additionally, the Plan must be revised within 10 years of finalization but may be updated more frequently if necessary.

**Visit Us at <https://wildlifeactionplan.nmdotprojects.org/> to View the Final Plan**

**Questions Regarding the Final Plan? Please Contact:**

Matthew Haverland, NMDOT Wildlife Coordinator

P.O. Box 1149

1120 Cerrillos Rd., Room 206

Santa Fe, NM 87504

or...

[Wildlife.Corridors@state.nm.us](mailto:Wildlife.Corridors@state.nm.us)

or...

505-470-3656

(If no answer, please leave a name and number and we will call you right back!)

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