

Wildlife Crossings in Idaho

Idaho Transportation Department



History

- Some of the first wildlife crossings in Idaho were constructed in the late 1970s
 - US-30 Fish Creek Pass Bridges
 - Three undercrossings with fencing in 1977-1978
 - Mule deer and elk



Some of the first wildlife crossings in Idaho were constructed in the late 1970s before the immediate need for such structures was even established. In 1977 and 1978 three bridges were constructed as undercrossings for mule deer and elk herds to safely pass under US-30. All three undercrossings are located just east of Lava Hot Springs in southeast Idaho.

Photo: Aerial view of the most easterly undercrossing

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- Other early wildlife crossings
 - South-Central Idaho, SH-75 East Fork Wood River Bridge Extension
 - Ledge/shelf undercrossings, either side of river in 2002
 - Canada lynx riparian corridor
 - Northern Idaho, US-95 Copeland Box Culverts
 - Three undercrossings with fencing in 2005
 - Deer, elk, moose
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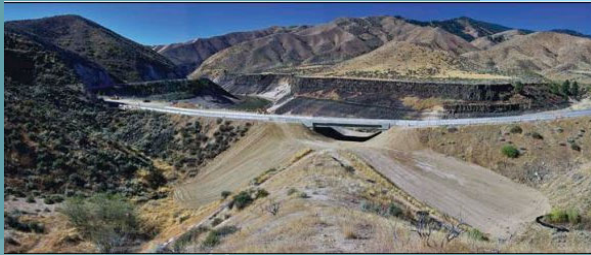


The next few undercrossings were not constructed until the 2000s. Two animal crossing locations were identified on SH-75 in south-central Idaho and US-95 in northern Idaho. In south-central Idaho, the bridge was extended over the East Fork of the Wood River and a ledge or shelf was added for terrestrial wildlife, primarily Canada lynx, to cross safely under the highway as in the top picture here (point to top picture). And in northern Idaho 1, three undercrossings consisting of large concrete box culverts were installed to allow for large mammals such as deer, elk and moose to safely cross

Photos: example of a wildlife shelf under a bridge (my picture from Vermont) (top), One of the Copeland underpasses in north Idaho (bottom)

US-21 Cervidae Peak Wildlife Crossings

- Southwest Idaho, undercrossing (2011) and first overcrossing (2023) in the state
- Mule deer, elk migrations



There are now two wildlife crossings on SH-21 north of Lucky Peak Reservoir in southwest Idaho, an undercrossing bridge constructed in 2011 and the first ever wildlife overcrossing that was just finished in fall 2023. Both were constructed for mule deer and elk to safely migrate to their winter range in the Boise River Wildlife Management Area.

The uncrossing was constructed for both mule deer and elk migration routes; however a major elk migration path was also identified about a mile north of the undercrossing. Even though both species use the overcrossing, it was primarily constructed for elk herds, which actually prefer overcrossing rather than undercrossing anyway.

Photos: Cervidae undercrossing (left), elk and mule deer using the Cervidae underpass together (top right), mule deer using the overpass almost immediately after construction was complete (bottom right)

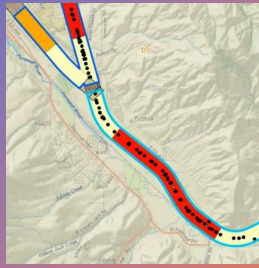
Statewide Crossing Projects

- ~17 wildlife crossings statewide
- Proposed future wildlife crossings:
 - US-95 McArthur Lake Bridge
 - in construction
 - I-90 Osburn Bridge “the bridge to nowhere”
 - partially funded: federal grant
 - US-30 Rocky Point Wildlife Crossing
 - partially funded



There are approximately 17 wildlife crossing structures statewide to date. In the past, ITD has not kept track of these or other wildlife mitigation projects, so we may not have a comprehensive list but we hope to have a complete list and interactive map of specific crossing locations within the near future and will be tracking these types of projects moving forward. Currently there are three crossing projects in the program, one that is in construction, McArthur Lake Bridge on US-95 in Northern Idaho, and two that are partially funded, Osburn Bridge on I-90 also in northern Idaho and Rocky Point wildlife crossing in Southeast Idaho. The bridge at McArthur Lake will allow deer and wolverine to pass under the highway to and from the McArthur Lake Wildlife Management Area, the Osburn bridge (AKA the bridge to nowhere) is a decommissioned bridge that will be modified for large ungulates to cross over the Interstate and three undercrossings will be constructed for wildlife, primarily deer to move to and from Bear Lake in southeast Idaho.

Photos: Osburn bridge (left), deer carcass clean up by ITD maintenance crews at rocky point (right)



Other Wildlife Projects

- Other wildlife mitigation projects or studies
 - exclusion/barrier fencing, reduced speed zones, advanced warning systems, and wildlife detection systems
 - US-95 Garwood to Sagle Wildlife Crossing Corridor Study
 - Statewide Wildlife-Vehicle Collision Study- Hotspot Analysis

In order to keep wildlife and the travelling public safe on roadways, we will do other wildlife mitigation projects such as installing exclusion or barrier fencing with our ROW, implementing reduced speed zones and even installing advanced warning systems or wildlife detection systems. ITD also will conduct studies on how wildlife interacts with our roadways and how they might impact wildlife movements and migrations as well as fragment habitat connectivity. We also aim to make our roadways safer for motorists by conducting studies focused on hotspots or increased risk of wildlife-vehicle collisions statewide. This type of study will help ITD prioritize areas of concern throughout the state.

Photos: barrier fencing within our ROW (top left), a segment with increased crashes with wildlife on Idaho roadways (top right), an example of a warning system (bottom)

Considerations

- Numerous factors to consider (primary)
 - traffic counts
 - crashes
 - animal migration or movement patterns
 - roadkill or carcass data
 - species
- Other factors to consider (secondary)
 - cost
 - topography
 - constructability



There are a number of factors to consider, first you want to collect data on traffic counts, crashes, animal migration or movement patterns, roadkill or carcass data, and what species are moving across or getting struck on our roadways. Once a general location is identified then secondary factors such as cost of construction or potential structure, and the topography and constructability that compliments the topography should be considered.

Photo: proposed location of Cervidae Peak overcrossing complimenting the topography of the natural landscape



Wildlife crossings are beneficial to both humans and wildlife. Roads are safer and wildlife-vehicular crashes are reduced when crossings are available for animals to use. Keeping animals alive and off our roadways assists economically including hunting and tourism (wildlife viewing). Some crossings can even be used by livestock or have multiuse functionality such as recreational (biking, fishing, snowmobiling). Roads are known to cause fragmentation within the landscape, and constructing wildlife crossings can create habitat connectivity, which maintains a high level of genetic diversity and results in overall population viability. Most importantly for our hunters here in Idaho wildlife crossings mean more animals, more hunting, more meat, more fur.

Photo: Crossing structures are site-specific movement corridors that link wildlife habitat separated by pavement and high-speed vehicles (Credit: Jeff Stetz) from FHWA Wildlife Crossing Structure Handbook Design And Evaluation In North America



Funded by Grants

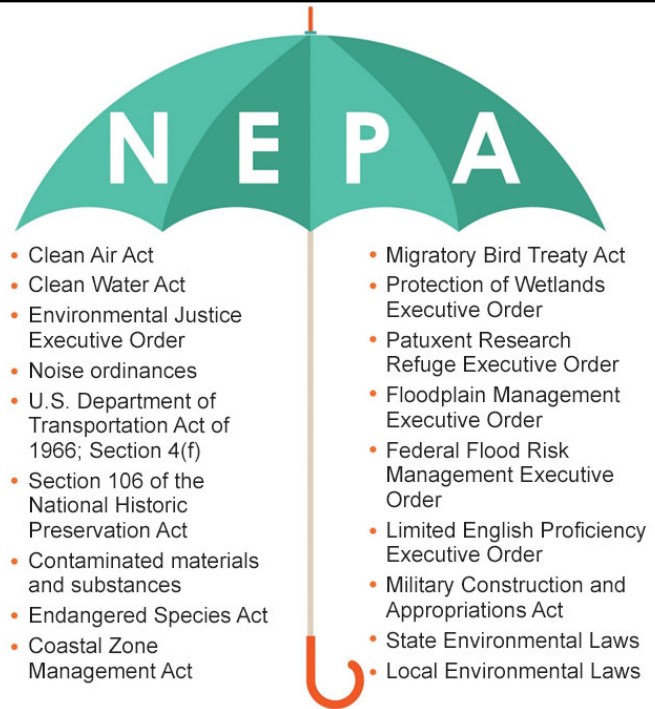
- Wildlife crossing projects are funded by federal grants
 - Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP)
 - America the Beautiful Challenge
 - Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL)
 - Wildlife Crossings Pilot Program
 - Fish Passage Grant Opportunities

As of today, all wildlife crossings projects in Idaho are federally funded by competitive federal grants such as the Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP) which funded Cervidae Peak overcrossing, the America the Beautiful Challenge, and other grant opportunities under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) or Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), which also allocates monies towards fish passage projects.

Photo: Culvert to bridge project in D2 over Maggie Creek on US-12

Federal and/or State Regulations

- Federal Grant is a Federal Nexus = NEPA
- Regardless of funding:
 - Endangered Species Act Section 7 (or Section 10) will need to be completed
 - If impacts to waters of the US, Clean Water Act Section 404 permit may be required from US Army Corps of Engineers
- No State regulations



Since all wildlife crossing projects in Idaho are funded by federal grants the National Environmental Policy Act or NEPA needs to be complied with. Under the NEPA umbrella all these (point to picture) environmental regulations, plus more, need to be considered. However, impacts to threatened and endangered species under the Endangered Species Act and waters of the US under the Clean Water Act still need to be considered regardless of funding. Currently we have no state regulations for wildlife crossings, which could change in the near future..... (continued on next slide)

Other States

Build capacity for planning and implementing wildlife crossings:

- Provide funding for a coalition of NGOs and agencies. [CO SB 23-151](#) (2022)
- Allow state wildlife and transportation agencies to coordinate on mitigating wildlife barriers for new transportation projects. [CA AB 2344](#) (2022)

Provide funding for wildlife corridors and crossings:

- Create a dedicated fund for wildlife crossings. [CO SB 23-151](#) (2022), [NM SB 72](#) (2023)
- Authorize funds from a trust income account for shovel-ready wildlife crossing projects. [WY SF 106](#) (2023)
- Appropriate funding for wildlife crossing projects. [UT SB 3](#) (2023), [WA SB 5689](#) (2022)

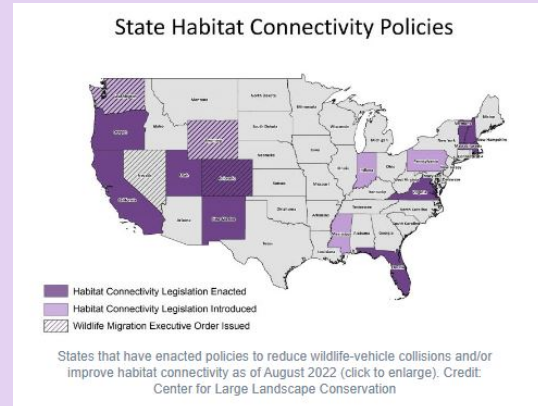
Protect and reconnect wildlife habitat:

- Introduce memorials to support restoration of critical habitat. [AZ SM 1001](#) (2021), [NM SM 10](#) (2021)
- Acquire and protect lands that complete a wildlife corridor. [FL HB 7047](#) (2023)

Funding Opportunities

Idaho

- No legislation, E.O., or regulations
- No state funds
- Competitive Federal Grants



.....Because most of the western states, including Colorado, California, New Mexico, Wyoming, Utah, Oregon, Washington and Nevada have either issued Executive Orders or passed legislation to require implementation or fund wildlife crossings or protect and reconnect wildlife habitat. Unfortunately, this is not the case in Idaho, we do not use state funds to construct these types of projects and there is no legislation, executive orders, or regulations requiring ITD to consider wildlife passage or habitat connectivity in our projects. Right now, our funding for wildlife crossing and mitigation projects, as stated earlier, comes solely from competitive federal grants.

Photo: Center for Large Landscape Conservation showing the states that have enacted policies to reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions and/or improve habitat connectivity.

