



November 1, 2023

Dr. Jennifer Norris, Executive Director  
 Wildlife Conservation Board  
 P.O. Box 944209  
 Sacramento, CA 94244-2090

Subject: WCB Funding Application – “Siskiyou Mountains I-5 Wildlife Crossing Planning Project”

Dear Dr. Norris:

The undersigned non-profit wildlife conservation organizations strongly support the “Siskiyou Mountains Interstate-5 Wildlife Overpass Planning Project”, and we urge the Wildlife Conservation Board to grant funding for this proposal. This project seeks to restore connectivity and safe passage for elk, deer, mountain lion, black bear, and other wildlife across Interstate 5 (I-5) between Yreka and the Oregon border to alleviate one of the most problematic barriers to wildlife movement in California. The Department of Fish and Wildlife’s (DFW) “California Wildlife Barriers 2022” report listed this section of I-5 (W005) as one of the most important priority barriers in the north state.

Wildlife habitat connectivity is important for daily and seasonal movement of wildlife, maintenance of wildlife and ecosystem health, and climate adaptation. Like other trans-continental highways, I-5 is a barrier to wildlife movement and source of mortality for wildlife populations throughout most of its length, from the U.S. border with Baja California to the border with British Columbia. I-5 and its adjacent developments impede critical east-west movement of wildlife species and experiences a high rate of wildlife-vehicle collisions, injuring and killing drivers, causing millions of dollars of property damage, and, of course, killing a large and diverse range of animals every year.

When built, I-5 wildlife crossings in the Siskiyou Mountains will provide human safety, save taxpayer dollars, and help connect and reconnect wildlife movement across this large landscape, while providing cumulative benefits to a multitude of wildlife species – including elk, deer, predators, and countless other wildlife species. Supporting this effort will provide a long-term benefit for everyone and will substantially aid in species survival, genetic health, and range expansion.

Based on extensive GPS data collected by DFW, roadkill and crash reports collected by the U.C. Davis Road Ecology Center, camera trap observations of wildlife at existing structures and in nearby habitats, and other data, the project team will identify the best possible locations for wildlife crossings. The project team will then determine which types of crossings are most suitable for different wildlife species to cross the interstate. The project team will clear project alternatives through the Caltrans process, resulting in feasible and buildable crossing projects in a number of areas.

As I-5 traffic loads increase, elk, deer, mountain lions, black bear, and other wildlife will face ever-increasing population separation and rates of collisions and across the highway. One or more wildlife crossing opportunities in the Siskiyou Mountain region will reduce this unnecessary wildlife mortality, restore critical connectivity between habitat areas on both sides of I-5, and enhance public safety.

Funding the “Siskiyou Mountains Interstate-5 Wildlife Overpass Planning Project” will mark a critical step towards increasing wildlife health, reducing vehicle collisions, and making I-5 in the Siskiyou Mountain region safer for both wildlife and traveling motorists. We urge your strong support for this important proposal.

Sincerely,

Ryan Bronson, Director of Government Affairs  
Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation

Don Martin, President  
California Chapter – Wild Sheep Foundation

Lori Jacobs, President  
California Houndsmen for Conservation

Adam Chavez, President  
California Hawking Club

Steve Jarvis, Chief Executive Officer  
California Deer Association

Marc Engstrom, Director of Public Policy, California  
Ducks Unlimited

Fred Harpster, President  
Black Brant Group

Mark Hennelly, Vice President of Government Relations  
California Waterfowl Association

Steve Miller, President  
Tulare Basin Wetlands Association

Gary F. Brennan, President  
San Diego County Wildlife Federation

Loyal Taylor, President  
Cal-Ore Wetland and Waterfowl Council

Chriss Bowles, President  
California Bowmen Hunters/State Archery Association

James Stone, President  
Nor-Cal Guides & Sportsmen’s Association

Rick Travis, Legislative Director  
California Rifle & Pistol Association

Glennon T. Gingo, President  
Mzuri Safari Club

Wayne Wickham, President  
Sacramento Safari Club

Clark Smith, President  
San Francisco Bay Area Chapter – Safari Club International

Devin O’Dea, California Chapter Coordinator  
Backcountry Hunters & Anglers

Dawnita Harwood, President  
California State Chapter – National Wild Turkey Federation