



August 16, 2024

Mr. Shailen Bhatt
Administrator
Federal Highway Administration
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Transmitted with the Application

RE: ADOT & AZGFD Grant Request from the Wildlife Crossings Pilot Program for Completion of the State Wildlife Connectivity Plan, FY2024-2025

Arizona Sportsmen for Wildlife Conservation (AZSFWC) appreciates the opportunity to lend support for the grant application of the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) and the Arizona Game and Fish Department (AZGFD) to the Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) Fiscal Year 2024-2025 Wildlife Crossings Pilot Program (WCPP).

AZSFWC is the leading 501c-3 non-profit organization dedicated to wildlife conservation, habitat improvement, youth recruitment and retention, as well as providing educational opportunities for outdoor enthusiasts on issues important to their passions. AZSFWC member, affiliate, and associate groups reach across the spectrum of wildlife conservation, angling, hunting, shooting, outdoor recreation, and businesses from across Arizona. Our member groups represent well over 28,500 people from Arizona.

ADOT is requesting approximately \$480,000 in WCPP funding to complete a State Wildlife Connectivity Plan. In conjunction with AZGFD, ADOT will use this funding as follows:

- Update identified linkages mapped from previous studies and stakeholder meetings,
- Process animal collar data into Geographic Information System (GIS) layers,
- Develop a GIS mapping tool,
- Analyze data for collisions and connectivity needs,
- Prioritize wildlife-vehicle conflict (WVC) reduction and connectivity projects for each district, and
- Scope out designs and cost estimates to support future project programming for prioritizing projects.

Arizona has more than 28,000 lane miles of state and federal highways, so it is expected that WVCs are going to increase as our state's population continues to grow, coupled with more vehicles on the highways. This study will help ADOT be proactive in identifying both additional safety and operational needs, as well as present opportunities to improve wildlife connectivity and mitigate habitat fragmentation across the state.

AZSFWC Support for ADOT-AZGFD State Wildlife Connectivity Plan Grant – 8-16-24

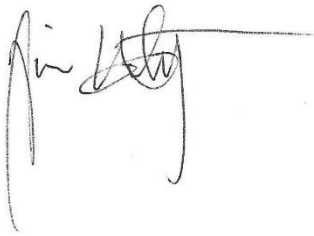
Arizona Sportsmen for Wildlife Conservation
PO Box 75731 New River, AZ 85087

ADOT's previous experience with wildlife crossings has demonstrated that mitigation projects are effective in both reducing WVCs by 90-100%, as well as promoting permeability across the state's highways. This wildlife connectivity plan will result in the identification of locations for future projects that will maximize these benefits.

Arizona's wildlife will benefit with safe passage across heavily used highways and increase habitat connectivity throughout the state. This project will also promote motorist safety by reducing WVCs and will afford a valuable opportunity to make data publicly available in a user-friendly way.

AZSFWC and 30 of our organizations (list attached) strongly support this project and the funding request.

Thank you for your consideration of ADOT and AZGFD's WCPP application!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jim Unmacht", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Jim Unmacht
Executive Director



**AZSFWC Organizations Supporting the ADOT & AZGFD
WCCP Grant Application for Completion of the
State Wildlife Connectivity Plan**

Anglers United
AZ Antelope Foundation
AZ Chapter of Backcountry Hunters and Anglers
AZ Chapter of National Wild Turkey Federation
AZ Chapter of Safari Club International
AZ Council of Trout Unlimited
AZ Deer Association
AZ Desert Bighorn Sheep Society
AZ Elk Society
AZ Flycasters Club
AZ Houndsmen's Association
AZ Mule Deer Organization
AZ Outdoor Sports
AZ Predator Callers
Conservation First USA
Conserve and Protect AZ
Diablo Trust
Friends of Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge
Mogollon Sporting Association
Mule Deer Foundation
No Excuse Hunting and Outdoors
Outdoor Experience 4 All
Southern AZ Quail Forever
Southwest Wildlife Foundation
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership
Trust for Public Land
Valley of the Sun Quail Forever
Wildlife for Tomorrow
Wildlife Water Works
Yuma Valley Rod & Gun Club

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