



Eagle County Safe Passages for Wildlife Phase II Connectivity Assessment

Presentation to the Eagle County Board of Commissioners

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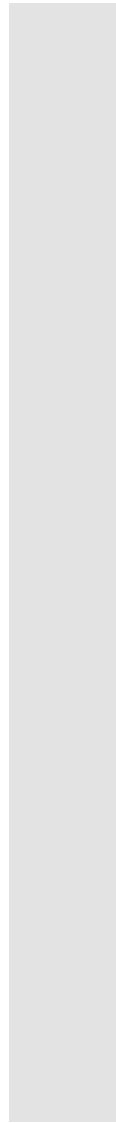
Paige Singer, Rocky Mountain Wild

Adam Palmer, Eagle County



Project Goal

To create a common vision that identifies and prioritizes important wildlife movement areas and highway crossing zones in Eagle County.



Phase I

- Identified habitat connections for wildlife movement across roads in Eagle County
- GIS based habitat analysis
- Completed in 2016

Phase II

- Broader stakeholder engagement
- Incorporate local & expert knowledge
- Include additional county roads
- Rank prioritized highway segments
- Identify needs for compatible land use and land management

Phase II designed to address needs identified in Phase I

Objectives

- Identify and prioritize wildlife movement areas and highway crossing zones
 - Based on existing data and expertise
- Recommend the best locations for crossing structures
 - Influence capital improvements for wildlife-highway mitigation
- Provide land use and land management guidance
 - Inform planning, permitting, trails, public lands management, private land conservation
 - Align efforts across jurisdictional boundaries

Stakeholders

- Eagle County
- Colorado Department of Transportation
- Colorado Parks and Wildlife
- US Forest Service, Holly Cross RD
- Pitkin County Open Space and Trails
- Town of Vail
- Towns of Eagle, Avon, Basalt
- Eagle County Conservation District
- Eagle Valley Land Trust
- Walking Mountains Science Center
- Wilderness Workshop
- Roaring Fork Conservancy
- Vail Resorts
- Battle Mountain
- Vail Valley Mountain Bike Association
- Local citizens

Timeline

September 2017

Project kickoff & stakeholder meeting

November 2017

Two expert workshops in Eagle; 1 in Basalt

Winter 2017/18

Preliminary field assessment

March-May 2018

Prioritization of identified wildlife linkages

June 2018

Site visits with CDOT and stakeholders

October 2018

Stakeholder meeting: Final plan review and implementation next steps

November 2018

Final draft report

Assessment Process

1. Expert workshops to define and prioritize wildlife movement areas and highway crossing zones

Inputs:

- Phase I habitat linkage models
- Wildlife-vehicle collision hotspots (CDOT)
- Wildlife habitat data & collar data where available (CPW)

2. Field assessment to identify potential wildlife crossing locations or other mitigation needs and opportunities

Assessment Process

3. Prioritization criteria based on:
 - Wildlife and safety needs
 - Implementation feasibility and opportunity
4. Stakeholder site visits and mitigation review
 - Engineering considerations
 - Additional values and land uses
 - Partnership and funding opportunities
5. Synthesize recommendations in a Plan
 - Guidance document for all stakeholders to pursue collaborative efforts

Prioritization Criteria

The **Need** for Wildlife-Highway Mitigation – Tier 1 Prioritization



Wildlife Criteria

- Connectivity value to a population
- Magnitude of cross-road movement
- Use by threatened or endangered species



Safety Criteria

Safety hazard to motorists

Prioritization Criteria

The **Likelihood** of Mitigation – Tier 2 Prioritization



Feasibility Criteria

- Threat to wildlife movement
- Land security
- Mitigation feasibility and constructability
- Mitigation and partnership opportunity

Field Review with Stakeholders

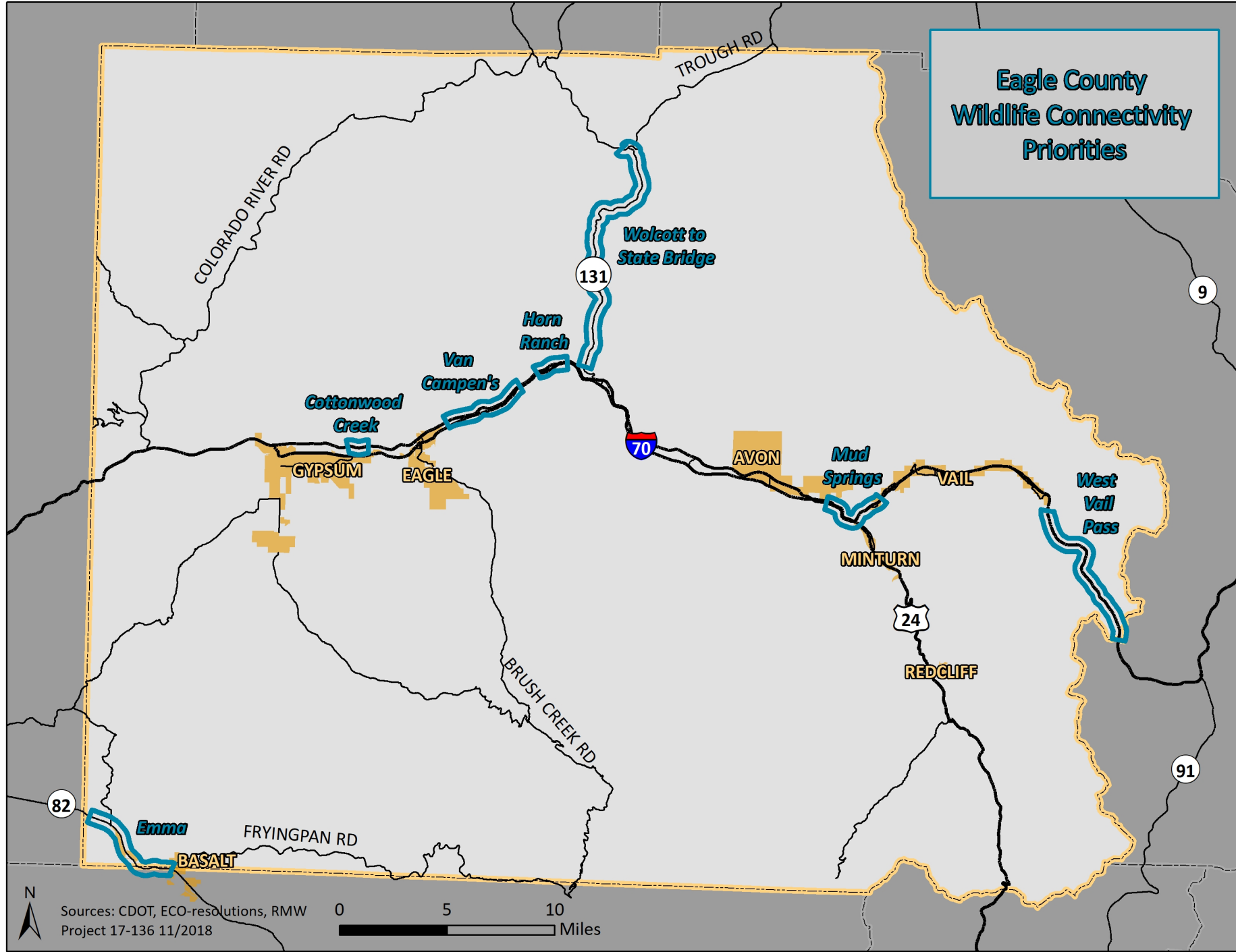
- Engineering feasibility review and revisions to initial mitigation ideas
- Input on land use challenges or management needs around proposed mitigation locations
- Highlight highest priority mitigation locations within a wildlife linkage area



Rank	Linkage	Mileposts	Wildlife Need	Safety Need
1	SH 131 Wolcott to State Bridge	1-14	High	Very High
2	I-70 West Vail Pass	182.5 - 190	Very High	Medium
3	I-70 Horn Ranch	153 - 154.5	High	High
4	I-70 Mud Springs	169.5 - 173	Very High	Medium
5	I-70 Van Campen's	148 - 152	Medium	High
6	I-70 Cottonwood Creek	143 - 144	Medium	High
7	SH 82 Emma	18 - 23	Medium	High



Highest Priority Wildlife-Highway Linkages



Initial Implementation Priority Areas

I-70 West Vail Pass

- Construct wildlife crossing structures in coordination with the West Vail Pass Auxiliary Lanes Project
- Coordinate with the Forest Service to manage human activity

I-70 Mud Springs

- Extend and improve wildlife exclusion fence alignment
- Replace the Mud Springs box culvert with a wide bridge or large culvert

SH 82 Emma

- Replace box culvert at MP 22.1 with a wide underpass or construct an overpass at MP 22.2
- Make wildlife exclusion fencing continuous and control all gaps at driveways and access roads with deer guards

US 24 Minturn to Gilman

- Identify the best locations for wildlife crossing structures and wildlife exclusion fence

Partner Roles

CDOT

- Maintain dialogue with partners
- Construct and maintain wildlife crossings; Integrate mitigation into upcoming projects
- Primary funding source

CPW

- Provide wildlife data, information and expertise
- Assist with landowner contacts
- Collaborate on mitigation design and construction

USFS/BLM

- Coordinate habitat improvement projects
- Use Plan to inform land management; Provide consistency with agency plans and policies
- Funding support for mitigation

Local Governments

- Town of Vail, other Towns, Pitkin County Open Space, ECO Trails
- Collaborate on local projects
- Funding support

Partner Roles

Eagle Valley Land Trust

- Conduct volunteer projects and funding for habitat improvements on existing conservation easements
- Pursue conservation easements on key parcels

Non Profit Organizations

- Walking Mountains, Wilderness Workshop, others
- Education, outreach; integrate into existing programs
- Fundraising; engage volunteers

Private Entities

- Vail Resorts, Battle Mountain
- Build education and awareness among visitors
- Integrate mitigation and wildlife habitat into development plans
- Funding and support for wildlife crossings

Residents and Recreation Groups

- Educate residents and user groups about wildlife movement needs; Funding and support for projects
- Volunteer
- Coordinate trails and recreation planning

Safe Passages Plan Implementation

Eagle County's Role

- Plan Adoption
- Integrate the Safe Passages Plan data, maps and recommendations to guide Land Use Regulations; zoning overlays and/or site development standards
- Use the Safe Passages plan to inform future Comprehensive Plan and Sub-Area Plan updates
- Funding support and assistance for priority projects
- County Engineering Department assistance and support for feasibility studies as needed

Near Term Infrastructure Project Priorities

Action	Partner Contributions
Mud Springs fence realignment	<p><i>CDOT</i> – construction and maintenance</p> <p><i>Eagle County, Town of Vail</i> – collaborate on design; community outreach</p>
Wildlife-exclusion fencing at select I-70 interchanges, East Vail	<p><i>CDOT</i> – construction and maintenance</p> <p><i>Eagle County, Towns</i> – possible funding; collaborate on design</p>
Mud Springs wildlife crossing	<p><i>CDOT</i> – conduct engineering feasibility study</p> <p><i>Eagle County, Town of Vail, ECO Trails, USFS</i> – engage in study and design concepts; funding support</p>
Dowd Junction wildlife improvements	<p><i>CDOT</i> – Dowd Junction Interchange Project</p> <p><i>Eagle County, Town of Minturn, Battle Mountain</i> – engage in study and design concepts; funding support</p>
West Vail Pass wildlife crossings	<p><i>CDOT</i> – West Vail Pass Auxiliary Lanes Project</p> <p><i>Eagle County, CPW, USFS, Town of Vail, Vail Resorts</i> – engage in study and design concepts; funding support</p>

Next Steps

- Hire consultant project coordinator (Estimated Cost \$20K)
 - Present Safe Passages Plan, outcomes, priority actions and estimated costs to Towns and other partner or community groups, including opportunities for volunteer projects
 - Identify near-term opportunities for volunteer projects to remove unneeded fencing and pursue grant funding; Coordinate with partners to organize volunteer work days
 - Collaborate with Eagle County Planning to provide guidance and direction for integrating the Plan into county planning, zoning and regulations
 - Coordinate with CDOT to develop preliminary cost estimates for priority mitigation. Large transportation projects may require feasibility studies

Thank You!

