



**Board of County Commissioners**

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November 14, 2023

Mr. Chris West  
National Fish and Wildlife Foundation  
1133 Fifteenth St., N.W., Suite 1000  
Washington, DC 20005

RE: RESTORE Colorado I-70 East Vail Pass Wildlife Crossings Project

Dear Mr. West,

The Eagle County Board of County Commissioners supports Summit County's application for the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation RESTORE Colorado 2024 grant opportunity. This funding will support the I-70 East Vail Pass Wildlife Crossings Project, a comprehensive and collaborative endeavor aimed at enhancing connectivity for a number of large mammals and endangered species, as well as improve the safety of travelers along I-70. Specifically, this grant will help fund the design and engineering phases, which are critical to implementation.

This project has long been identified by Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) and local leaders as a priority due to high traffic volumes, which create a major barrier to wildlife including the endangered Canada lynx. More than 4,000 wildlife-vehicle accidents are reported each year in Colorado, resulting in an estimated \$80 million in property damage, injuries, and fatalities. It is likely that at least two to four times as many collisions go unreported.

East Vail Pass is the final piece of the puzzle for restoring wildlife connectivity through over 12 miles of National Forest lands within the Gore Range along the spine of the Rocky Mountains within Summit County. Wildlife fencing and crossing structures that guide animals over or under highways have demonstrated a significant reduction of wildlife-vehicle collisions. When completed, this project will create important wildlife crossing structures that will help reduce fragmentation of habitats, facilitate wildlife movement, and reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions. Our community members have identified wildlife conservation as a priority, and the Vail Pass project will offer benefits to Eagle County as well as within Summit County, including wildlife connectivity and public education.

This project is already firmly off the ground and moving towards success with strong local support, historical data collection, a completed feasibility study, and funding support from SB 22-151 (Safe Passages for Colorado Wildlife and Drivers) and the Transportation Commission. CDOT is moving the effort into project phase, and Summit County, CDOT, and Summit County Safe Passages are working collaboratively to secure and administer funding.

We ask you to consider the economic, human safety, and ecological benefits of this project, and award this project the full funds requested.

Sincerely,

Kathy Chandler-Henry  
Chair

Matt Scherr  
Commissioner

Jeanne McQueeney  
Commissioner