



New Mexico Cattle Growers' Association

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by e-mail--Wildlife.Corridors@state.nm.us

Draft Wildlife Action Plan
Attn: Matthew Haverland
1120 Cerrillos Road, Rm 206
P.O. Box 1149
Santa Fe, NM 87505

Re: Comments on Proposed New Mexico Wildlife Corridors Action Plan

Dear Mr. Haverland:

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment upon the proposed New Mexico Wildlife Corridors Action Plan ("Proposed Plan"). On behalf of the New Mexico Cattle Growers' Association (NMCGA), with members in 32 of the state's 33 counties as well as in 19 other state we offer these comment as follows:

1. We applaud the effort to identify critical stretches of our New Mexico highways that pose a risk of traffic accidents with wildlife. There are in fact many more stretches of road in New Mexico that can and should be treated, especially in elk country.
2. In that regard, we do not see any discussion about wildlife population numbers or their management in the Proposed Plan. Unfortunately, it is apparent that the New Mexico Game & Fish Department is not managing elk populations in various areas throughout New Mexico. With an over-abundance of elk in certain areas relative to the resources available to them, traffic accidents are more likely to occur. Some accidents will be fatal or near fatal. Each is most likely expensive for our citizens and visitors. Without deliberate management of elk populations in New Mexico so that the populations correspond to the forage they, other wildlife and livestock require in that area, there will be more wildlife population movement across our roads as they search for forage and water. We implore you to hold the New Mexico Game & Fish Department accountable to do this resource and population work that is critical to mitigate the risk that elk pose to our citizens and visitors on New Mexico highways.
3. We also note that there is no apparent discussion in the Proposed Plan about work that the New Mexico Department of Transportation should already be doing to monitor for and repair fence breaks along our roads. When elk break wires on those fences, cattle in an adjoining pasture have the opportunity to leave and, with green grass in the bar ditches alongside the road, they will go there to graze. Their presence on the side of a road increases the risk of traffic accidents. The New Mexico Department of Transportation is responsible for maintaining and repairing those fences along our highways. The New Mexico Department of Transportation should already be aggressively and routinely monitoring those fences for elk breaks and down trees and repairing any. There are far too many instances where that is not happening. If the New Mexico Department of Transportation will fulfill that responsibility, that work alone will lessen the risk of traffic accidents on all of our New Mexico highways and will do so at a significantly lower cost than the infrastructure projects that are being proposed.

Sincerely,

Loren Patterson, President

LOREN PATTERSON, President, Corona; **BRNISON CORN**, President-Elect, Roswell **JOE CULBERTSON**, Vice-President At Large Amistad, **ROY FARR**, SW Vice-President Datil; **DAVE KENNEKE**, NW Vice-President, Cimarron; **JEFF DECKER**, SE Vice-President, Lovington; **CLIFF COPELAND**, NE Vice-President, Nara Visa; **SHACEY SULLIVAN**, Secretary-Treasurer, Bosque Farms; **RANDELL MAJOR**, Past President, Magdalena **TOM SIDWELL**, Past President, Quay