



The Crossing

A Colorado Wildlife and Transportation Newsletter

Our **Mission** is to provide safe passage for people and wildlife in Colorado.

A Letter from the Alliance Members

Thank you for taking a few minutes to explore the inaugural edition of the Colorado Wildlife and Transportation Alliance's stakeholder newsletter. As the Alliance has grown since its inception in 2018, so too has the importance of finding solutions to the challenges of safety, habitat connectivity, and sustainable transportation planning in Colorado. A critical component of this work is communication—not just about the work the Alliance is doing, but about the field as a whole. This newsletter will strive to help fill that need through regular Alliance updates, discussion of policy issues, promotion of partner organization achievements, resource sharing, and opportunities for collaboration. If this is your first introduction to the Alliance and you're interested in learning more about what we do, please contact one of our [representatives](#).

CPW Hires Wildlife Movement Coordinator

CPW recently hired Wildlife Movement Coordinator **Michelle Cowardin** to help coordinate the use of wildlife data to identify highway mitigation projects to protect our wildlife and keep Colorado motorists safe. Cowardin will also play a key role for the Alliance as a co-chair and primary point of contact between the Alliance and CPW. "Wildlife crossing structures are a win-win for wildlife and for people. These projects allow animals to move safely across the landscape for seasonal and daily movements, while decreasing the risk to motorists of having wildlife collisions.

Connecting Virtually in 2021

2021 marked a year of significant momentum in Colorado and across the country for wildlife connectivity and transportation issues. From conservation organizations to state and local agencies to members of the public, these issues were often at the forefront of conversations about the future of Colorado. This increase was demonstrated in the success of the Alliance's summer webinar series, a slate of three separate webinars each focusing on a different aspect of the Alliance's work and wildlife and transportation issues more generally. Topics included:

- [Alliance Success Stories and Lessons Learned](#)
- [Prioritizing Areas for Wildlife-Highway Mitigation Across the State](#)
- [How to Get Involved with Wildlife and Transportation Issues in Colorado.](#)



Photo taken on US Highway 9

As traffic increases across the state, more roadways will become barriers to wildlife movement, therefore it is important that we work together to develop solutions to maintain healthy wildlife populations in Colorado," said Cowardin. Read the full press release [here](#).



Selecting Priority Projects for 2022

2021 was a year of exciting progress for the Colorado Wildlife and Transportation Alliance. With heightened focus on habitat connectivity and transportation issues from policy makers, increased opportunities for funding, and multiple project prioritization studies being advanced in Colorado, the Alliance understood it was an opportune time to adapt and grow as an organization to meet the needs of the state and region.

The Alliance held a series of organization-wide strategic planning sessions in the summer of 2021, which led to the formation of a newly minted governance structure and a revamped focus on championing and advancing priority projects. The Alliance is in the process of assessing statewide priorities and selecting pilot projects to focus where they Alliance can have impact in 2022, with the idea being that more projects will come online as capacity and momentum grows. Other mitigation projects may still be pursued by each of the regions.

An Education Success

A core aspect of the Alliance's mission is to act as a communicator of wildlife and transportation issues across the state. In a partnership with CPW's education experts and partner organization ARC-Solutions, the Alliance worked to fulfill this charge by developing a series of education modules for elementary, middle, and high school students. Currently, two lesson plans have been developed for Colorado teachers to use in their classrooms. One focuses on a real situation concerning movement corridors for deer and elk populations in northwestern Colorado; the other focuses on the conflict and human dynamics that exist around the planning of wildlife crossings. Four Colorado teachers are piloting the lessons currently and their feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. Plans to continue and expand these educational opportunities are slated for 2022.

How will the Alliance select projects? Alliance leadership is working to develop a data-driven framework based on multiple factors to understand which projects rise to the top of the priority list and merit the organization's limited time and resources. Criteria for project selection includes WVC data, migration patterns, CDOT transportation priorities, and other factors.

How will the Alliance support projects that are selected? As all projects differ, the Alliance will make an initial assessment of a project's needs on a case-by-case basis. The Alliance plans to support projects at various phases of their life cycles through education and outreach, coordination with local stakeholders and policy-makers, funding strategy, and other means.



Photo taken on I-25 GAP Project

Partnership Growth

2021 was a year of exciting changes for the Alliance, with perhaps no change more exciting than entering into a partnership with Pew Charitable Trusts. As one of the most important funders in the conservation sphere, Pew is supporting the Alliance in multiple ways. The Alliance is grateful for Pew's support and emphasis on progress through collaboration. Read more about Pew's interest in Colorado wildlife connectivity and migration corridors [here](#).



Policy and Funding Corner

Two exciting policy outcomes occurred in late 2021 that will impact the Alliance's trajectory and priorities over the coming years.

1 The federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act was signed into law, which includes numerous programs and dedicated funding dollars for wildlife connectivity and safety programs. Notably, the Wildlife Crossing Pilot Program includes \$350m for crossing projects that meet the criteria. The Alliance is in ongoing discussions internally and with partners to ensure it is well positioned to support Colorado projects in accessing the federal funds.

2 Colorado's Department of Natural Resources released its Big Game Policy Report, "[Opportunities to Improve Sensitive Habitat and Movement Route Connectivity for Colorado's Big Game Species.](#)" The report outlines a variety of strategies DNR plans to pursue to increase habitat connectivity and wildlife movements over the coming years. The Alliance, mentioned in the document as a key organization in attaining these outcomes, will use this report as it continues to develop and implement its project-focused strategies.



Wildlife and Transportation in the News

Check out these great articles about projects around the state

[Pew Charitable Trusts - New Wildlife Crossing in Colorado Would Save Lives and Money](#)

[Pew Charitable Trusts - Colorado Leads States in Protecting Wildlife Migration Corridors](#)

[CPW - Watch for wildlife, avoid collisions during daylight saving time](#)

[Telluride Daily Planet - Making way for Colorado wildlife](#)

[ABC News \(KDRO\) - New wildlife mitigation features along I-25 Gap Project](#)

[CDOT - Colorado Interstate 25 project delivers one of largest wildlife mitigation systems in North America](#)

[CDOT - Colorado State Highway 9 Wildlife Crossings - The First Five Years \(Video\)](#)



Photo taken on US Highway 9

If you would like to learn more about the Alliance and how you can get involved with wildlife connectivity and transportation issues in Colorado, please contact us through [the Alliance's website](#).

