

## WILDLIFE-FRIENDLY HIGHWAY ALTERNATIVES – JACKSON SOUTH

### I. Background

The impacts of transportation infrastructure, including road creation and expansion, present some of the greatest threats to Teton County's wildlife. In January 2009, the Wyoming Department of Transportation (WYDOT) released the Jackson South Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for reconstructing 7.2 miles of Highway 89 north of Hoback Junction. Prior to this release, local leaders worked to design a lower-impact alternative for consideration. Unfortunately, the DEIS did not consider a range of reasonable options, including the county's alternative, that would improve driver safety, accommodate additional traffic capacity, and utilize context-sensitive design that upholds local priorities, which have a strong focus on wildlife protection.

Despite community concerns about the impacts this road expansion will have on the area's natural resources, the project is moving forward. A record of decision is expected in July 2010, after which more detailed design (including wildlife mitigation measures) will be initiated. Of great importance to this specific project, which relates to both driver safety and wildlife safety, is the extent of crashes that involve animal collisions in this section – nearly half. However, the DEIS included no comprehensive analysis or clear approaches for mitigating these impacts for drivers and wildlife.

*At this point in the process, specific information and recommendations are critical.* Technical experts are needed to make suggestions regarding pre-design research, the appropriate type, size and number of crossings, identification of quality habitat for connections on both highway sides, and long-term plans for monitoring mitigation measures. **In line with a timely case study, this project will result in the production of special guidelines and best management practices for wildlife-friendly transportation projects in Teton County.** These recommendations, which could be best described as protocols for wildlife mitigation measures in transportation projects in the region, will not only be available for the timely Jackson South project but will also be available to guide future transportation projects.

### II. Issue statement

This project will ensure that a synthesis of the best available science on wildlife-friendly technologies and best management practices are offered for a major highway expansion project in Teton County - Jackson South. This expansion currently stands to have long-lasting detrimental impacts to the area's natural resources. (The ecological impacts of roadways on wildlife are well documented in scientific literature and in local roadkill studies.) The project will result in the production of guidelines for wildlife-friendly transportation projects in the Teton County, which can be utilized in other transportation efforts in the future, and that are otherwise unavailable.

### III. Project description

The Conservation Alliance proposes a project that will ensure that wildlife-friendly technology and the best available science are applied to a major highway expansion project in the southern portion of Jackson Hole. The expansion project, as it currently stands, will have significant detrimental impacts on the area's natural resources, including Teton County's wildlife populations and scenic vistas. The impact area contains crucial seasonal ranges for mule deer, elk, bighorn sheep, and moose.

*Specifically, funds will enable our organization to contract with experts in the field of wildlife-friendly transportation so that the best possible recommendations and alternatives can be presented in the design phase of this project.* Experts and consultants will be asked to address ecological effects such as the following: mortality from road construction, mortality with collisions from vehicles, modification of animal behavior, alteration of the physical environment, alteration of the chemical environment, spread of invasive species, and increased use of areas by humans. Based on an understanding of these potential effects, experts will make recommendations for mitigation based on the best available science.

By actively contributing to the design phase of the project and bringing forward strong recommendations regarding wildlife mitigation measures, the Conservation Alliance will work to create a better end product – a highway project that includes the strongest possible measures to reduce its impacts on the area's irreplaceable natural resources. We will consult with county officials, non-profits and community leaders on bringing forward specific recommendations.

#### IV. Project evaluation

Broadly speaking, the success of this project will be measured by the extent to which future transportation projects in Teton County incorporate the best available wildlife mitigation technologies in their design and implementation. More specifically, project success will be achieved through the production of special guidelines for Teton County to better integrate wildlife protection standards in transportation decisions. In the immediate future, success will be determined through the incorporation of these standards in the Jackson South project.

#### V. Organizational capacity

As one of the oldest and largest membership organizations in Jackson Hole, the Conservation Alliance is a respected voice for smart growth and responsible land-use planning. We are known for providing accurate, well-researched information to the public, as well as for organizing and encouraging public participation at the local, state, and federal levels.

The Conservation Alliance is a member of the Hoback Interdisciplinary Team that works in collaboration to identify the best alternatives for this highway project. The Conservation Alliance has extensive history working with WYDOT on technical aspects of road improvement and expansion in the area. Recent examples include projects in the Togwotee Pass area, the Hoback River/East segment of the Hoback Reconstruction sections and Snake River highway reconstruction. Previous funding has enabled additional technical advice on these projects, resulting either in less detrimental projects or commitments to take additional time to fully pursue less damaging alternatives.

##### Primary Staff:

*Kristy Bruner, Community Planning Director* - Kristy has been Community Planning Director for over three years. Kristy received a master's degree in Urban Ecology from the University of Alaska, and she has a bachelor's in Environmental Science and International Relations from the College of William & Mary. Her graduate work emphasized greenways planning and corridor ecology, in which transportation issues were a key focus. Her background also includes work as a field biologist in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. She first started working in the ecosystem in 1994.

*Louise Lasley, Public Lands Director* - On the staff of the Conservation Alliance for nearly three years, Louise brings years of local, regional and international conservation experience with her. She has administered grants, performed field studies, worked collaboratively with governments, industry and conservation organizations, and produced comprehensive reports on issues ranging from wildlife protection to habitat resources. She has a B.A. in Geology from the University of Colorado. Louise has been a resident of Jackson Hole for 26 years.

To carry out the project, the Conservation Alliance will partner with another non-profit organization in the region that specializes in transportation-related research. This partnering organization will synthesize available information and make recommendations for Teton County.

#### VI. How our project meets each component of 1% for the Tetons's Statement of Ideal: *1% for the Tetons awards high-leverage grants to forward-looking projects sustaining the Tetons area's natural resources and related qualities.*

##### A) "High-leverage"

**Ai) "Financial leverage"** – The funding request from 1% for the Tetons represents an estimated 67% of hard costs for a stand-alone study. Our organization will contribute an estimated 33% of hard costs and will continue to pursue additional funding from individual donors and foundations to strengthen our efforts in education and outreach.

**Aii) "Organizational leverage"** - Our organization will partner with a technical consultant to recommend wildlife-friendly transportation protocols specific to the Tetons area. We will also consult with regional and national organizations that specialize in this subject.

**Aiii) "Outcome leverage"** - This project directly addresses a design phase of a major highway expansion, with an intent to minimize the impacts of permanent transportation infrastructure on long-term wildlife movements. By contributing to the best design up-front, the long-term effects of such an expansion could be minimized.

**B) "Forward-looking projects"**- This project directly addresses an urgent conservation and land-use decision. The project also will result in a stand-alone study that will make a significant difference in future transportation projects.

**C) "Sustaining"** - This project directly works to protect wildlife in Teton County, the highest priority of our current generation in Teton County.

**D) "Tetons area"** -This project area (Jackson South) comprises both natural and human communities connected to the Teton Mountain Range.

**E) "Natural resources"** - This project works to protect habitat connectivity for deer, elk, bighorn sheep, and

moose.

F) "Related qualities" - This project directly contributes to minimizing conflicts between human-based transportation and wildlife movements.

## VII. Budget

### Part One

	Amount/Value Provided by Applicant & Partners		Amount Provided by 1% for the Tetons		Total	
	\$	% of total	\$	% of total	\$	%
Cash	\$3,300	33%	\$6,700	67%	\$10,000	100%
In-Kind**		0%	N.A.	N.A.	\$0	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$3,300</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>\$6,700</b>	<b>67%</b>	<b>\$10,000</b>	<b>100%</b>

\*\* The Conservation Alliance will pursue an additional \$4,500 for education and outreach that is beyond the scope of a stand-alone study. Over the next several years, Conservation Alliance staff and community members are expected to contribute considerable in-kind resources (primarily staff time and overhead) in many facets of our work on the Jackson South project.

### Part Two – non-1% Funds

Funds provided by the applicant will be secured through individual donations to the organization in the upcoming fiscal year. The Conservation Alliance has secured \$2,000 for education and outreach on the Jackson South project from the Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative for the upcoming fiscal year.

### Part Three – Use of Requested Funds from 1%

	Amount/Value Provided by 1% for the Tetons
	\$
Professional Consulting Services / Partner Organization	\$5,000
Report Production and Outreach	\$1,700
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$6,700</b>

## VIII. Timeline

### Part One

If funding is received, the Conservation Alliance will immediately initiate contracted work with the partnering organization. (This immediate timeline is largely due to the expected release of the Jackson South project record of decision in July 2010.) Our project will result in a stand-alone study that should be completed by December 2010.

### Part Two

Funds specific to professional consulting services, report production, and most outreach-related funds are expected to be used by December 2010. Partial outreach-related funds could be used through Spring 2011 (pending the project design schedule for the Jackson South project.)