

May 7, 2020

The Honorable Kim Schrier
U.S. House of Representatives – District 8
1123 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congresswoman Schrier,

The below signed organizations write to urge your support of federal funding for wildlife-roadway crossing projects in any forthcoming legislation. Wildlife-roadway crossing projects make our roads safer for all motorists, reduce accidents warranting attention from our first responders, prevent lost revenue to the taxpayers, and reduce wildlife mortalities. According to Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), who is responsible for gathering information on collision inventory, the number of wildlife-vehicle collisions in the state is not precisely know. However, on average, WSDOT receives 1,500 reports each year, with 167 human injuries and one human fatality, from wildlife-vehicle collisions. According to the number of deer and elk carcasses removed from the state highway by WSDOT the number is actually much higher. WSDOT removes approximately 3,000 deer and 85 elk carcasses from Washington state highways annually. Each collision costs more than \$4,000 and one out of every 258 Washington drivers hit a deer, moose, or elk in 2018-2019.¹

Public support for wildlife crossing projects in Washington is high and the benefits are shared by a wide range of stakeholders. The existing wildlife safety corridor built across the busy Interstate 90, east of Snoqualmie Pass, connects wildlife in the North and South Cascades. The crossing, part of a series of improvements along Interstate 90, saw success from animal usage before the project was even complete.

The highway network in Washington was built before wildlife crossing issues attracted public attention and wildlife habitat has been disrupted due to human development causing fragmentation in wildlife habitat. Securing additional public funding will be critical in the success of future wildlife crossings that protect wildlife from the smallest of creatures, to Washington's big game animals and will protect the safety of drivers on Washington roadways.

The undersigned organizations encourage you to support federal funding for wildlife crossings similar to what is proposed in S. 2302, America's Transportation Infrastructure Act of 2019. This bill includes a pilot program that will fund the construction of wildlife crossings across the nation, allocating \$250 million from FY 2021 – FY 2025 to be accessible by state departments of transportation to supplement state funding for these projects. These funds are essential for WSDOT to construct the crossings for priority sections of Washington's roadways, and we encourage you to support this and similar efforts in stand-alone legislation or as a part of the House's own highway bill.

Thank you for your work on behalf of Washington and our nation.

Sincerely,

Backcountry Hunters and Anglers – Bart George, Chairman of Washington Chapter

¹ <https://newsroom.statefarm.com/animal-collision/>

Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation – Aoibheann Cline, Western States Coordinator

Conservation Northwest – Mitch Friedman, Executive Director

Ducks Unlimited – Gary Link, Director of Public Policy- Western Region

National Wild Turkey Federation - Russell McDonald, Washington State Chapter President

Pheasants Forever, Inc and Quail Forever – Al Eiden, Western Region Director

Safari Club International - Benjamin Cassidy, Director of Government Affairs

Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership – Madeleine West, Director- Center for Western Lands