

NEWS RELEASE – For Immediate Release: 9/16/11

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## **Teton County Wildlife Crossing Study Completed**

According to the Jackson Hole Wildlife Foundation, more than 300 elk, deer and moose, plus countless other animals, are killed each year by vehicles on Teton County roads.

This month, valley residents have three chances to find out how they can help stop this from happening by throwing their support behind efforts already underway to get the Wyoming Department of Transportation to incorporate safe wildlife crossings in its plans for widening valley highways in coming years.

On Sept. 20 (6 p.m. at the Old Wilson Schoolhouse Community Center) and again on Sept. 21 (noon at the Alliance office, 685 S. Cache St.), researchers from Montana State University's Western Transportation Institute will present the results of a study contracted by the Jackson Hole Conservation Alliance on which measures to reduce road kills will work best for three local highways slated for expansion – Jackson South Hwy. 89, Hwy. 22 from Jackson to Wilson, and Hwy. 390 to Teton Village.

Then on Sept. 22, 5 to 7 p.m. at 685 S. Cache, the Alliance is hosting a free celebration with Safe Wildlife Crossings for Jackson Hole to promote the study's recommendations and to cheer the progress our community has made toward its goal of protecting both wildlife and motorists to date.

The Western Transportation Institute's study identifies "high wildlife-vehicle collision zones" and makes recommendations to mitigate the impacts of the coming highway expansions. WTI collected data, conducted two field trips, and worked with the Wyoming Department of Transportation, Wyoming Game and Fish Department, Bridger-Teton National Forest, Jackson Hole Wildlife Foundation, Nature Mapping Jackson Hole, the Conservation Research Center of Teton Science Schools, Safe Wildlife Crossings for Jackson Hole and others to produce this study. Teton County, 1% for the Tetons, the Community Foundation of Jackson Hole, the Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative, Patagonia, Inc. and many community members have all generously helped fund it.

"The interest and support that this project has from such a broad segment of the community clearly illustrates the high level of importance we give to the region's wildlife," said Louise Lasley, Program Director of the Jackson Hole Conservation Alliance.

Future highway expansions are planned by the Wyoming Department of Transportation for Hwy. 89 south of town to Hoback Junction, Hwy. 22 between Jackson and Wilson, and Hwy. 390 from Hwy. 22 to Teton Village. The WTI study will provide information on the best locations for wildlife crossings that will accommodate a variety of wildlife species. Short- and long-term solutions will address which type of mitigations would be most appropriate.

"Last winter proved to be brutal for wildlife in Teton County," said Trevor Stevenson, Executive Director of the Jackson Hole Conservation Alliance. "There couldn't be a better time to find solutions to these unnecessary deaths on our roads."

This comprehensive study will be presented to the Wyoming Department of Transportation to help them design future road reconstructions in a way that will keep wildlife and motorists safe. Participation by all of the wildlife and land management agencies in the county provided the best and most current data for the study, which will be posted on the Alliance website when the final draft is completed.

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