

House Joint Memorial 10 Report Summary
Water and Natural Resources Interim Legislative Committee
October 16, 2012

HJM 10 Purpose: To encourage the Departments of Transportation (NMDOT) and Game and Fish (NMDGF) and the NM State Police (NMSP) to create a pilot traffic safety project, using existing resources, in an accident-prone area with the goal of reducing collisions between large animals and vehicles.

- HJM 10 was conceived and written by the Wild Friends Program.

Background: University of New Mexico's Division of Government Research reported that from 2006 to 2010 in New Mexico, there were 7,028 crashes involving animals. Of these, 11 were fatal and 734 crashes resulted in injuries to motorists. The most common animals struck were deer, involved in 4,010 (57%) of the crashes.

- Elk and domestic cattle were each involved in 12% of the crashes, and horses were struck 4% of the time. Collisions with pronghorn antelope were not recorded.
- Nationwide research has documented that accident reports represent half or less of actual collisions with large animals, particularly large game animals such as deer and elk, because many of these collisions go unreported.

Top Five Road Segments for Large Animal-Vehicle Collisions Reviewed by NMDOT and NMDGF

Road Number	Mileposts	Collisions 2006-2010	NMDOT District	HJM 10 Analysis Results
I-25	446-460 North of Raton	83	District 4	Use of existing resources likely would not reduce crash rates due to interstate driving speeds. Future opportunities exist to reduce the potential for primarily black bear-vehicle collisions by constructing limited fencing to force bears to cross at existing culverts and underpasses.
U.S. 70	276.4-294.6 Ruidoso Downs to Hondo	77	District 2	Segment was previously designated as a safety corridor by NMDOT and the route has been reconstructed to address safety issues.
U.S. 550	65.2-79.1 North of Cuba	73	District 6	Eliminated due to potential safety corridor designation caused by DUI-related collisions. Difficult to evaluate success of wildlife-related mitigation strategies separate from DUI-related strategies.
U.S. 64	160.4-171.7 Tierra Amarilla to Chama	60	District 5	Selected location for HJM 10 Pilot Project
U.S. 70	235-242.1 Tularosa to Bent	56	District 2	Potential future location. Will be used as an "untreated control" to measure success of U.S. 64 mitigation treatment activities.

U.S. 64 Pilot Project Description

NMDOT District 5 committed to installing two sets of elk crossing signs with flashing lights and implementing vegetation management treatments at key locations in the project area to increase driver visibility and response time.

- Four signs will consist of a yellow warning sign with an elk crossing symbol. The supplemental signs at all four locations will have the words "Next 4 Miles" below the larger sign.
- Two flashing lights will be installed with each sign timed to turn on at dusk and turn off at dawn.
- Signs will be installed by December 2012.
- Vegetation management will occur within the NMDOT right-of-way between mileposts 166.15 and 167.6 on both sides of U.S. 64.
- Small, scrub oak trees will be completely removed from the NMDOT right-of-way.
- Juniper and piñon trees will be trimmed to remove all branches between the ground and the height of six feet as measured on the trees.
- Cottonwood trees will not be trimmed or removed.
- To avoid impacts to wetlands, no vegetation will be removed from drainage areas.
- Vegetation management will be completed by late 2012/early 2013, depending on weather.

HJM 10 Project Team Recommendations

Please see fully described recommendations on page 7-8 of the report.

1. We recommend that the New Mexico State Legislature consider implementing a wildlife corridor speeding law, similar to HB1238 passed by Colorado in 2011. Colorado DOT has identified 100 miles of wildlife crossing zones where nighttime speeds were reduced to 55 mph during migration season (September through May). Speeding fines are doubled in these designated areas along Colorado roadways.
2. NMDGF and NMDOT should consider re-convening the Critical Mass Workshop, which was originally convened in 2003 as a result of the 2003 Wild Friends' House Joint Memorial 3. A second follow-up workshop is recommended to update the Priority Highway Segments list and map that was generated in 2003, which identified high risk areas for large game animal-vehicle collisions throughout New Mexico.
3. NMDOT Districts should investigate funding sources from the U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration to implement wildlife crossing best management practices along road segments that have proven to have a high number of large game animal-vehicle collisions.
4. Additional wildlife-vehicle collision mitigation strategies for other high-risk highway segments in New Mexico should be implemented opportunistically as highway improvement projects are implemented and monitoring should be conducted to determine effectiveness of mitigation strategies.
5. For future analyses of large animal and/or large game animal-vehicle collisions rates, NMDOT and DGR should consider categorizing and analyzing pronghorn antelope as a large animal/game animal.