

Aspen Times Letter to the Editor: [Grabow: Invest in Safe Passages](#)

Grabow: Invest in Safe Passages

Opinion | Nov 21, 2025

Meghan Grabow

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One morning early this week, as I turned onto Highway 133 toward Carbondale, I watched a young buck weave through traffic. Minutes later, driving toward Aspen, I passed a freshly killed elk calf and a deer near Aspen Village, an abandoned SUV with a crushed front end nearby. On my return trip, I witnessed a large buck struck by a vehicle near Red Hill, left alive but paralyzed as cars swerved around him on the blind curve. In less than five hours, on a 20-mile stretch of road, I encountered seven dead or dying animals.

These collisions aren't just traumatic for wildlife — they have real human costs. Families already stretched thin face lost wages, totaled vehicles, and medical bills from crashes that are entirely preventable. Many of the people most affected are those commuting long distances to serve our communities each day.

The next morning, I passed yet another vehicle with a smashed front end. I didn't need to look for the animal — I knew what I'd find.

We can and must do better. I urge Pitkin County and our community to continue investing in Roaring Fork Safe Passages. Protecting wildlife on our roadways means protecting the people who live and work here as well as reducing the needless suffering we see far too often on our highways.

Meghan Grabow

Carbondale



**BACKCOUNTRY
HUNTERS & ANGLERS**
COLORADO

Colorado Backcountry Hunters & Anglers
Statement for Protecting Wildlife Corridors
(January 2026)

Colorado Backcountry Hunters & Anglers (BHA) strongly support the development of well-planned projects to protect migration corridors that sustain Colorado’s iconic wildlife. As pressures from development, recreation, and transportation continue to fragment habitat, these tools offer one of the most effective, science-backed ways to reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions, maintain genetic diversity, and keep herds healthy. In addition, wildlife crossings may partially or fully pay for themselves in reduced insurance rates.

Thoughtfully designed wildlife crossings—paired with fencing, habitat restoration, and long-term monitoring—help reconnect critical landscapes and ensure that mule deer, elk, pronghorn, and other species can move freely between seasonal ranges. These investments benefit not only wildlife but also the people who live, travel, and recreate in our communities by improving road safety and reducing costs associated with collisions. We know that the **Roaring Fork Valley** is renowned for its wild places and wildlife, including thriving ungulate herds whose longevity depends on mitigating the impacts of development and other human activities.

Safeguarding existing wildlife corridors is essential. Once disrupted, the ecological functions of these pathways are difficult, if not impossible, to replace. Protecting them now will preserve the natural heritage, wildlife values, hunting opportunities, and outdoor traditions that define the Roaring Fork Valley and the broader Western Slope.

Our organization urges state and federal agencies, local governments, and community partners to prioritize corridor conservation and to implement well-planned wildlife crossings that support both responsible land stewardship and the long-term resilience of Colorado’s wildlife.

We fully support the efforts of the Roaring Fork Safe Passages toward these goals. We also want to direct your attention to the efforts by Colorado BHA as a partner in the Colorado Department of Transportation’s Wildlife and Transportation Alliance.



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Aspen Daily News Letter to the Editor: [Let's protect wildlife with safe crossings](#)

Let's protect wildlife with safe crossings

Nov 15, 2025

Editor:

(Re: “[Wildlife crossings make economic and ethical sense](#),” Nov. 12, Aspen Daily News)

In his guest commentary in support of wildlife crossings, specifically the local nonprofit Roaring Fork Safe Passages, Tom Cardamone noted “nature still has half here, and we residents bear some ethical responsibility to keep it that way.”

I passionately agree, this time, from the heart. Wildlife crossings began in France in the 1950s. They then took off in the Netherlands, which built more than 600 crossings. The Dutch built the world's longest animal crossing, more than half a mile long. In the United States, the idea has taken longer to catch on.

Wildlife crossings began here less than 20 years ago. But we have a chance to catch up.

It is always sickening to me to see a deer or elk felled by a truck or car and left dead or dying by the side of the road. Animals don't deserve this fate. As Jane Goodall said, "Animals feel pleasure and sadness, excitement and resentment, depression, fear, and pain, and are far more aware and intelligent than we ever imagined ... they are individuals in their own right."

The roads and highways that we build destroy the lives of animals. They cause habitat fragmentation and keep animals from accessing natural resources located on the other side of the road; they lower the amount and quality of natural habitat; they fragment wildlife populations, damaging social interactions and yes, they cause the death of thousands of animals each year in this valley.

I think it is well past time that we do what we can to help wildlife lead their lives without this particular threat from us. Let's protect their populations, conserve their habitats and yes, reduce their deaths. Then perhaps we can all be spared the sadness of seeing so many of them by the side of the road.

Note: I'm a former assistant attorney general and have served on the boards of the African Wildlife Foundation and WildlifeDirect.

Jacqueline Russell

Snowmass



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My name is Cameron Daniel. I am a third-generation resident of the Roaring Fork Valley and have lived here for the majority of my life. I currently serve as a Patrol Deputy with the Pitkin County Sheriff's Office, but I want to be clear that in no way is my letter today intended to be a representation of the Sheriff's Office.

Growing up here, I was raised by ranchers, farmers, and outdoorsmen, and I was given the freedom to hunt, fish, and explore our local backcountry. Respect and preservation of wildlife were ingrained into the culture, but these days, it seems to be a second thought as that culture has slowly eroded into an urban rat race. The valley floors that were once filled with ranches and open space are filling in with housing and other developments, slowly eroding wildlife habitat. I commend this community, especially Pitkin County, for its preservation of habitat and open space. Our wildlife is one of our community's most precious resources, and I'm writing to ask you to continue preserving it for future generations.

I'm sure you wonder why an avid hunter like myself is writing a letter advocating for wildlife. It's nothing new; hunters have always been among the most misunderstood advocates for wildlife, yet it's the North American model of wildlife management that brought many species close to extinction back to the healthy populations we see today. However, given how recently this state has chosen to ignore science-based wildlife management in favor of ballot-box biology, I think it would be better for me to share my experience as a deputy so you can accurately understand my passion for this project.

One of the first experiences I had as a deputy that kept me up at night occurred when I first started working patrol. It took place near Aspen Village after a bear had been hit by a car and was dragging its back legs, attempting to pull itself off the highway. Thankfully, a passerby reported it; after the person who hit him failed to stop or call it in, which happens all too often. The bear was lying there in pain until someone had the decency to call Dispatch, so I could put him out of his misery. I hunt bear, I eat bear meat, render the fat to cook with, use the tallow; I tan the hide, and keep every part I can from the animal. It was the indifference shown to that bear's life that kept me up that evening; any respectable hunter would never allow such waste and disregard for life to occur.

As I continued my career, I was often called upon to attend these calls, and because of my upbringing, I was able to put these animals out of their misery quickly. But I want to be clear that it never gets easier, and just like me, all of our deputies and CPW officers deal with this constantly on Highway 82.

Most of you see all the deer and elk piled up on the sides of the road rotting in the sun and think you have an accurate understanding of the number of animals that get hit every day, but the rest of our citizens don't. I see the animals that were hit by drivers who call in days later wanting a crash report, but never thought to inform us in the moment, so we could go and recover the animal, or see if it survived.

We see all the animals that are hit and picked up by people on the road kill list who, like me, are trying to provide quality, organic meat to their families, most of whom are also hunters. I hear all the calls on the radio of animals hit and fatally wounded, trying to cross the highway with the rest of the herd early in the morning, only to limp off and not be found. Those are the ones who will be eaten alive slowly by predators because they are too injured to run, or they will die slowly in misery. All of the animals with compound fractures who are left trying to crawl off the highway while cars whiz by, often times not even slowing down or attempting to help.

I see all the animals we drag off deep into the brush because we don't want other animals feeding on the carcass to get hit, which they often do because we are left with no other option but to leave the carcass where it is for CDOT to maybe come and pick them up weeks later.

I see the cubs who get hit, wandering up and down the highway after their mother was hit in front of them, confused and don't know where to go. I can go on and on about what we see but you and the rest of the public likely don't, but I won't. I'm not trying to traumatize anyone; I'm trying to help the rest of the public understand that what they see is a fraction of what is going on. I guarantee you I'm more aware of how brutal nature can be than anyone on this board, but that doesn't mean we shouldn't take action to limit these incidents when human interaction is the cause of suffering.

Highway 82 divides critical low-country habitat and river corridors from the Roaring Fork River, the main water source for deer, elk, and other wildlife. These animals already face enough challenges from winter kill, habitat loss due to development, and the fragmentation caused by our roadways, hunting, and living amongst multiple apex predators.

As a deputy, I see the heavy traffic starting before dawn and continuing into the evening, which are peak times when mammals like deer and elk are most active and vulnerable. CDOT data shows that on the six-mile stretch of Highway 82 from the Aspen/Pitkin County Airport to Aspen Village, more than 55% of reported collisions involve wildlife, with elk accounting for about 34%. I can tell you first hand that those numbers do not accurately reflect how many animals are killed; unfortunately, it's much more.

If the preservation of wildlife isn't enough cause for action, reports indicate that up to 30% of crashes in the broader Roaring Fork Valley involve animals, resulting in millions of dollars in vehicle damage, serious bodily injuries, and, sadly, more roadkill. These aren't just numbers; they represent real experiences and tragic losses for our wildlife populations and the residents of this community. As an SRO, I've had students who were afraid to injure an animal, swerve and crash their vehicles.

I'll leave it to the experts involved in this project to share all the statistics with you. We live in an abundance of information; you don't need to hear that from me, but I do encourage you all to do your own research, and when you do, you will see these projects save lives.

Supporting Roaring Fork Safe Passages means investing in safer roads for our community, protecting our wildlife heritage, and preserving the valley's outdoor way of life that

has been a part of our culture and community for generations. This is a win for drivers, animals, hunters, tourism, and future generations.

I respectfully urge the Board to support research, partnerships, and approvals to advance these crossings. I'm happy to answer questions or provide more details from my perspective as a citizen growing up in this wonderful community.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Cameron Daniel
Third-Generation Roaring Fork Valley Resident

Senate Transportation & Energy

03/25/2026

SB26-141 Wildlife Collision Prevention

Typed Text of Testimony Submitted

Name, Position, Representing	Typed Text of Testimony
<p>Janine Reid</p> <p>For</p> <p>League of Women Voters of Colorado</p>	<p>3/25/26</p> <p>SB26-141 Wildlife Collision Prevention</p> <p>Thank you Madam Chair, Members of the Committee, and Sponsors:</p> <p>I am Janine Reid, volunteer lobbyist for the League of Women Voters of Colorado, speaking in support of SB26-141. As you may know, the League has been nonpartisan all our 106 years, using our often-long-standing positions to take stances on bills and ballot measures. We support SB26-141.</p> <p>I live in Hotchkiss, Colorado on the Western Slope and am very familiar with wildlife on, near and above our roads. I frequently drive throughout this rural area and dodge deer, turkey, and smaller animals all year long. The bill’s objective of reducing motor vehicle crashes with wildlife by supporting all aspects of planning, engineering, building, and maintaining safe passage infrastructure on Colorado’s most dangerous roadways would go a long way to making our roads safe for motorists and wildlife.</p> <p>The League believes the voluntary \$5 collision prevention fee to be collected during annual vehicle registrations beginning in 2027 is very reasonable. We support dividing the dollars with 75% going towards building safe passages for wildlife in hotspot areas and 25% of the funds administered by Colorado Parks and Wildlife to conserve habitat on either side of crossings.</p> <p>Over and underpasses allow animals to safely reach critical habitat during migration. Crossings in the past have been paid through one-</p>

	<p>time general fund allocations and federal grant awards, but there are dozens more identified wildlife-vehicle collision areas. With the current deficit in the state budget and the reduction of federal funds, collecting this voluntary fee toward a new Collision Prevention Fund and contributing to the Colorado Wildlife Safe Passage Fund may allow for more wildlife crossing infrastructure to be built for the safety of all.</p> <p>We ask for your support of SB26-141.</p> <p>Thank you for your consideration.</p>
<p>Roland Halpern For Colorado Voters for Animals</p>	<p>Chairperson Cutter and Committee members, my name is Roland Halpern and I am the executive director of Colorado Voters for Animals.</p> <p>Colorado Voters for Animals supports SB26-141 as it represents a natural next step in Colorado’s ongoing effort to reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions and keep both people and animals safe while reducing personal property damage.</p> <p>We have long supported practical efforts to address animal-vehicle conflicts including support for HB 10-1238, which recognized the serious danger wildlife collisions pose on Colorado roads, and we supported SB 22-151, which created the Colorado Wildlife Safe Passages Fund to help expand wildlife crossing infrastructure. In fact, the four sponsors of that bill received Colorado Voters for Animals Legislators of the Year Award for this piece of legislation.</p> <p>Colorado has already seen that investments in wildlife crossings, fencing, and corridor planning has reduced collisions, protected drivers, saved animals’ lives, reduced costs to communities and prevented personal property damage. SB26-141 builds directly on those results - not abstract environmental projects but provable real public safety measures with real results.</p> <p>As our state grows and development expands even more roads will intersect with wildlife habitat and migration routes. This means this problem will not solve itself. It requires an ongoing commitment and a stable way to continue the work Colorado has already begun.</p> <p>For Colorado Voters for Animals, this issue has always been about both compassion and common sense. Protecting wildlife and protecting</p>

	<p>motorists go hand in hand. As a voluntary participation program, which we hope many Coloradans will take advantage of, SB26-141 is a practical, humane, and responsible progression of the efforts Colorado has already embraced.</p> <p>We respectfully ask for your support.</p>
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