

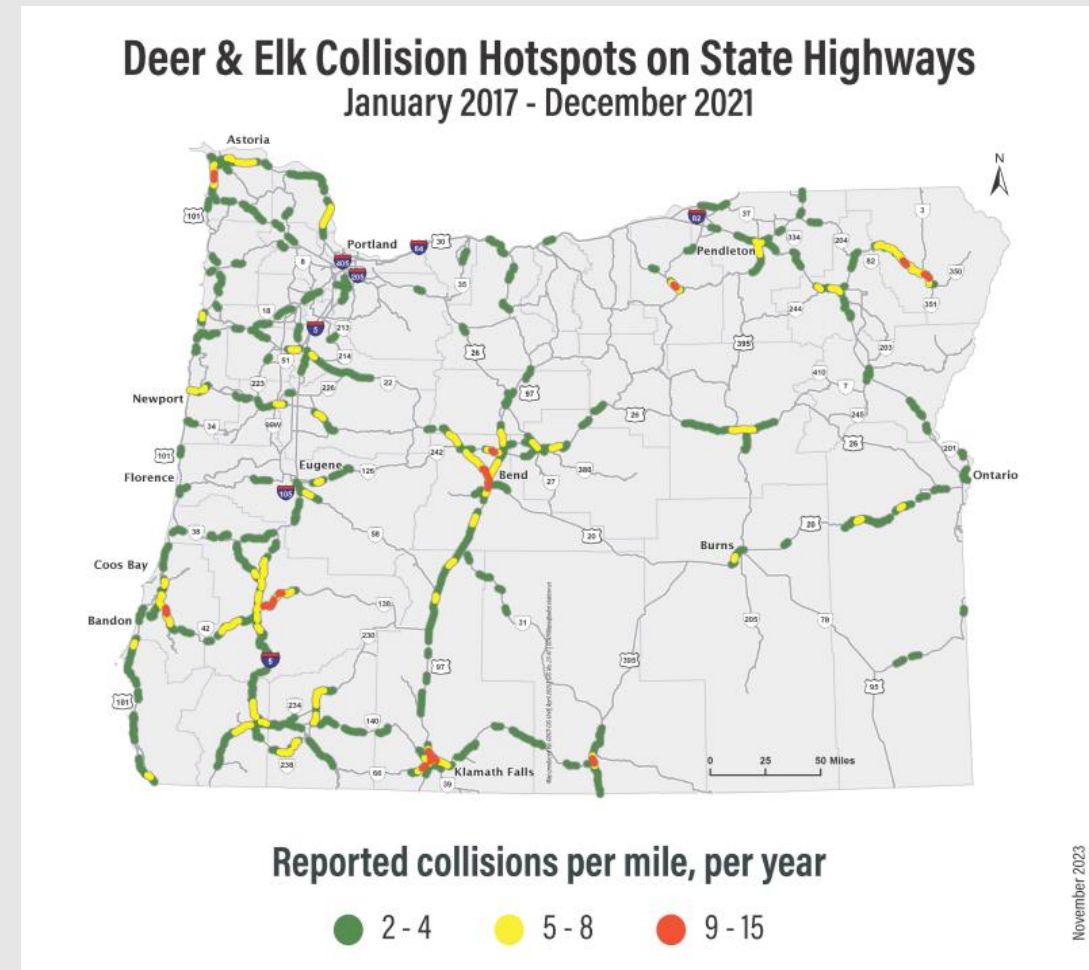
Wildlife Crossings

Oregon Department of Transportation
Amy Ramsdell – Administer, Delivery & Operations Division

Joint Committee on Transportation
December 11, 2024

Background

- Wildlife-vehicle collisions have **significant impacts** to the safety of our system users and wildlife
 - Approximately **6,000 collisions** per year in Oregon
 - **1-2 fatalities** per year
 - **36 serious injuries** per year (2017-2021)
- ODOT is **responsible for removing** wildlife remains from highway rights of way
 - Services conducted and funded by Maintenance Program; **balanced** with other **maintenance needs and resources**
 - **Safety concerns** for ODOT crews
- **Improvement cost ranges** :
 - Fencing: \$200K-450K per mile (both sides)
 - Underpass: \$1.5 - \$5 million
 - Overpass: \$10 - \$50 million



Action to date

- ODOT and ODFW completed the **Wildlife Corridor Action Plan** as directed in HB 2834 (2019)
 - ODOT published first legislative report in September 2024
- Increased **inter-agency collaboration** and **partnerships**
- Mapping and actively **identifying priority locations**
- Funded through a **combination of private and public funds**, including federal, SHF, state grants, and donations
 - **No dedicated, long-term funding source**
 - **\$7 million** in one-time legislative funding, direct appropriation (HB 5202 (2022))
 - Submitted two **IJA Wildlife Passage Pilot Program Grant applications** (I-5 & US97)
- Program **outcomes** include:
 - **4 projects** completed (3: US97 & 1: US20)
 - Collision reduction rate: **70 - 85%**
 - Approximately **12 miles of fencing**



Future Opportunities

- **Continuous collaboration** with our partners
- Advancing **priority locations**
- **Leverage federal funding** opportunities (when match funds are available)
- With sufficient and dedicated long-term funding, the program can **continue to grow, increase safety,** and **protect Oregon's wildlife**





Bernadette Graham Hudson
Wildlife Division Administrator
Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife





wildlife need to move



Food + Shelter +
Reproduce

Escape
Disturbance

Adapt to changing
environment



An estimated minimum **14.5 million** animals are killed on Oregon's roadways each year



Vehicle strikes are a significant driver of **population declines** in many species



High traffic volumes **block wildlife movement**, particularly for smaller species



Problem with a solution



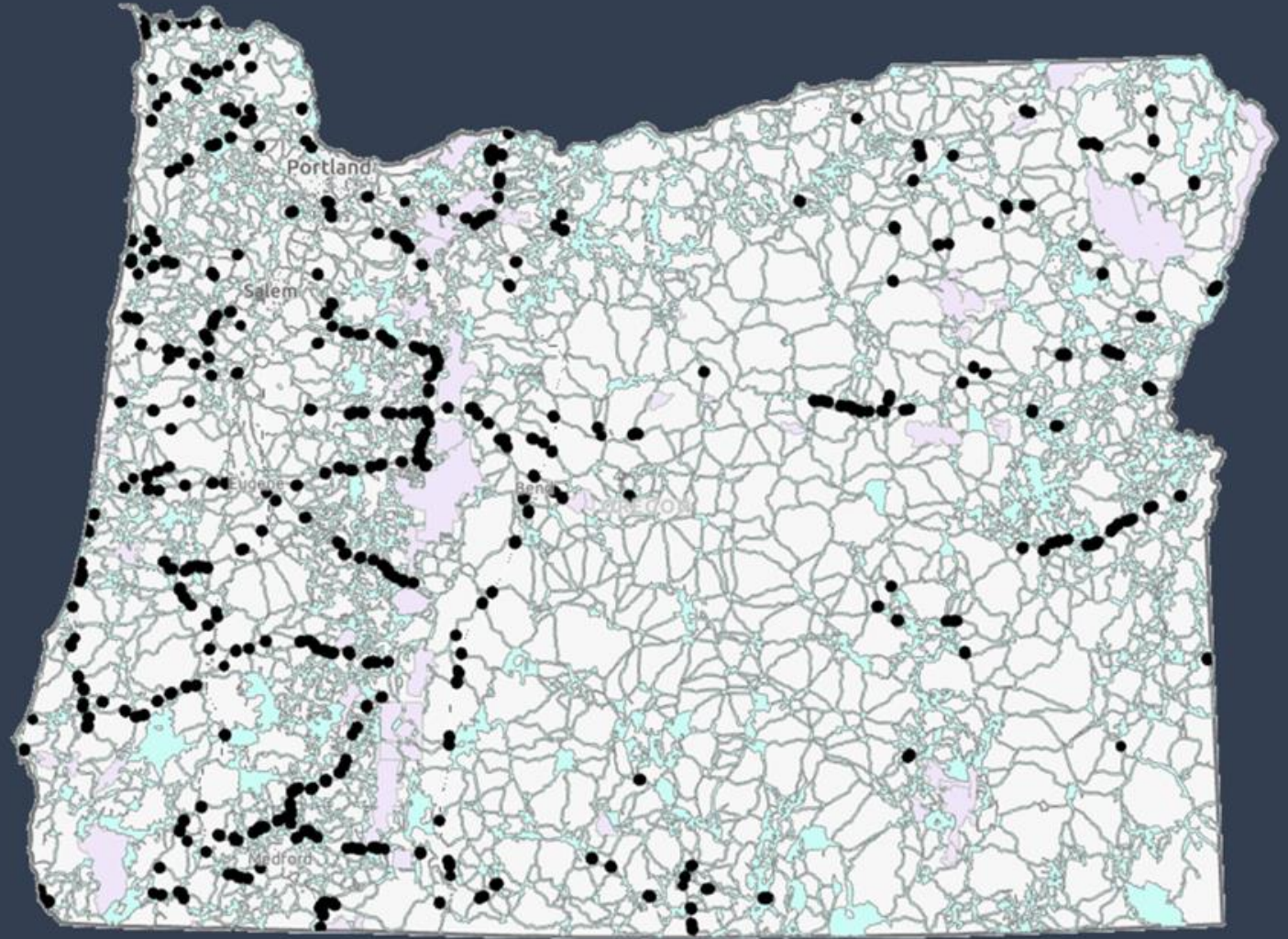
Mapping Priority Wildlife Connectivity Areas

● Priority areas for
transportation projects

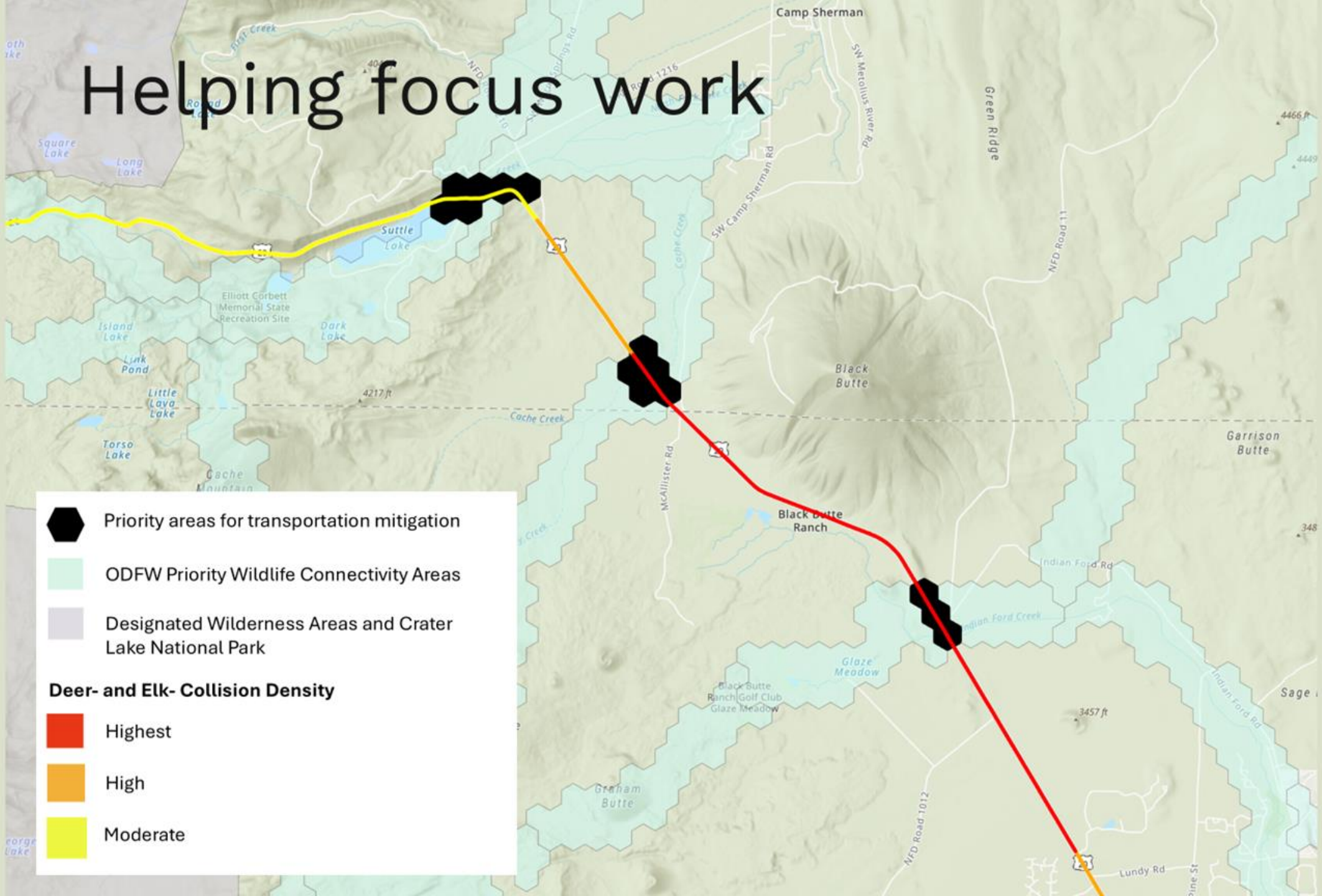
156 primary
priority areas


6 projects
completed

Helping focus work






Helping focus work



-  Priority areas for transportation mitigation
-  ODFW Priority Wildlife Connectivity Areas
-  Designated Wilderness Areas and Crater Lake National Park

Deer- and Elk- Collision Density

-  Highest
-  High
-  Moderate

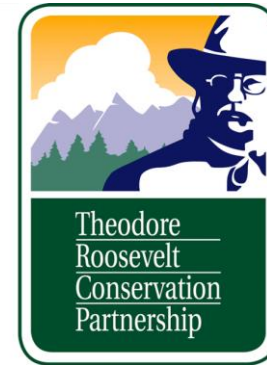


Pew



Sristi Kamal, Ph.D.

Deputy Director, Western Environmental Law Center



OREGON WILDLIFE FOUNDATION



Wildlands Network



The Cost of Collisions & Effectiveness of Wildlife Crossings

The Problem: Expensive & Dangerous

- ODOT's data shows there have been 357 known and reported elk collisions.
- The Western Transportation Institute (WTI) estimates that
 - Each deer deer collision costs a total of \$19,038 per collision and
 - Each elk collision costs \$73,196 per collision

This means Oregon has a \$114 million per year deer-vehicle collision problem and elk collisions have cost Oregonians an estimated \$26 million.

The Solution: Wildlife Crossings

- Oregon's Highway 97 crossing project has reduced deer-vehicle collisions by over 90%.
- The famous Banff National Park crossings have reduced ungulate collisions by nearly 90%.
- Colorado's crossings in the Blue River Valley have also reduced collisions by almost 90%

Widespread Support for Wildlife Crossings in Oregon



- Polls show **86%** of voters want the state “to build more overpasses and underpasses” for wildlife.
- **75%** of voters supported increasing state funding to build those crossings.
- **Over 60 diverse groups and organizations** have formally endorsed wildlife crossing legislation in past legislative sessions
- **57 Oregon state legislators** across political parties have supported crossing legislation.
- **Over 35,000** Watch for Wildlife License plates have been purchased by Oregonians since 2022, **raising \$1.2 million in revenue** for crossing projects.

Timeline of Legislation & Program Growth



2019

Legislature *unanimously passes HB 2834, requiring ODOT to work with ODFW to develop Wildlife Corridor Action Plan (WCAP) and establish a program to reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions* in areas where wildlife corridors in the WCAP intersect with proposed or existing public roads.



2021

HB 2548 introduced, resulting in a formal workgroup that studied and reported on funding issues and opportunities related to wildlife crossing infrastructure construction.



2022

After the federal Bipartisan Infrastructure Law of 2021 unlocks billions in funding for crossings, **OR legislature allocates a \$7 million to ODOT** for wildlife crossing construction via HB 5202 .



2023

A one-time *\$5 million lottery funds bond* was created via HB 5030 to **support a broad range of wildlife corridor projects**, including crossings. Funds are managed and dispersed through the Oregon Conservation and Recreation Fund.



2025

Timely opportunities and funding mechanisms to permanently fund ODOT's WVC reduction program.

An aerial photograph showing a winding asphalt road with double yellow lines curving through a dense forest of evergreen trees. To the left of the road is a large body of water with a deep blue-green hue. Several cars are visible on the road. The terrain is hilly, and there are some utility poles visible near the water's edge.

Questions?