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Comments: This is a Reminder of NM Wildlife Corridors Act passed NM Legislature in 2019 and of the long-term wildlife crossings and corridor planning in progress between NMDGF and NMDOT Environmental Bureau .

So far, there has been good identification of wildlife-vehicle accident hotspots statewide and the construction of a new effective US550 wildlife crossing south of Cuba.

BUT--

1. There is little focus on wildlife corridors in southeastern NM
2. The Taos Connectivity and Wildlife Corridors Conference in 2017 identified over 10 wildlife vehicle crash hotspots statewide & the area on the north end of Lincoln NF in the Ruidoso-Capitan-Carrizozo triangle was ranked 7th highest.
3. The FS needs to address the high level of wildlife mortality and vehicle accidents in that area - and especially between Ruidoso and Capitan on NM48, where mainly deer and elk are crossing the road to access the Lincoln NF.
4. Further south - on Hwy 82 from Cloudcroft to Artesia - there's also extremely high wildlife crash data collected by NMDOT that could be reduced and large culverts installed to reconnect habitat areas for ungulates and other species that need to migrate.
5. On a smaller scale but equally important - bridges, culverts and streams inside Lincoln NF need to be restored so that there is riparian connectivity and protection for aquatic life like fish and amphibians - so they are not left high and dry with damaged culverts or low water crossings that cut off passage or contaminate the water.

These considerations look at impacts on wildlife that are increasing as traffic and visitation increases in the forests. The estimate of 5 million wild animals killed annually on NM highways was made over 10 years ago. We need steps to bring that number way down.

Thank you.