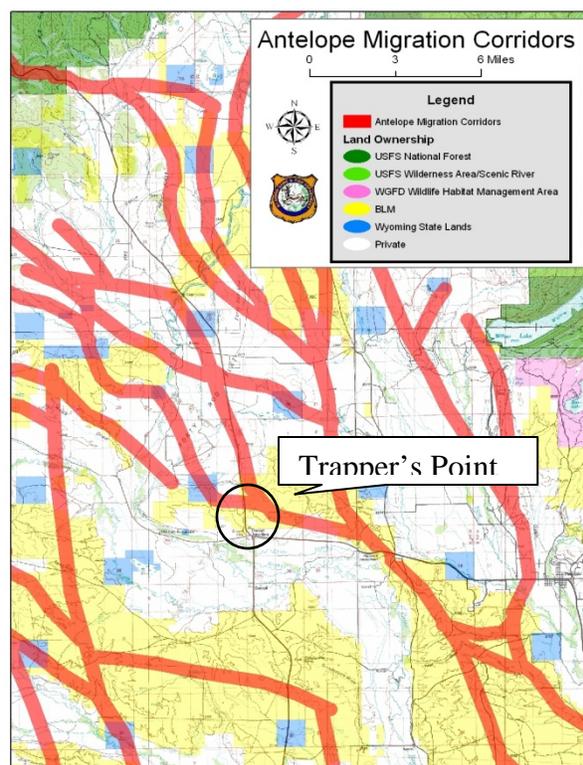


Wyoming Department of Transportation

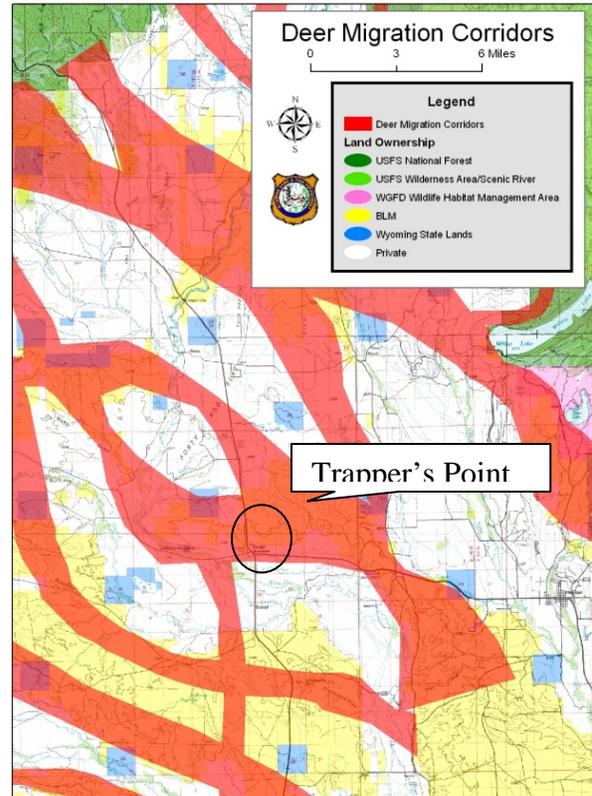
## Wyoming's Collaborative Effort to Preserve the Trappers Point Wildlife Corridor through Highway Safety

US 191 between the towns of Pinedale and Bondurant of Sublette County in Wyoming has experienced a high wildlife mortality throughout the years. It just happens to intersect with one of the largest wildlife migratory corridors in the lower 48 states. The area is known as the Upper Green River Valley corridor. This area extends from Jackson Hole and extends south to southwestern Wyoming. The corridor is several hundred miles long. It intersects with US 191 at a location known as Trapper's Point. Trapper's Point received its name from the nineteenth century fur trappers who took advantage of the natural terrain that bottlenecks the migratory herds. A nine mile segment along US 191 west of Pinedale experiences high wildlife mortality as a testimony to the historical trapping.

The Upper Green River Valley's wildlife is second to none according a business plan entitled "Path of the Pronghorn in the Upper Green River Valley, Wyoming." It was prepared by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. The area forms one-fifth of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem and contains healthy populations of big game, birds and fish. The big game numbers speak for themselves: The area provides 81% of the crucial winter range and nearly one-quarter of the migration routes for Wyoming's pronghorn antelope, 60% of the crucial winter range and one-fifth of the migration routes for Wyoming's mule deer and 42% of the crucial winter range and one-fifth of the migration routes for Wyoming's moose. These populations thrive thanks to the area's outstanding habitat. Private lands covering riparian areas and irrigated meadows along the Green River and its tributaries rise through mixed public-private sage uplands to aspen-conifer in the Bridger-Teton National Forest and form an interrelated mosaic used by most species at some point in their life cycle. A former director of the Wyoming Game and Fish Department declared the area as the "crown jewel" of the state's wildlife. Recent energy development has encroached on this through land development and transportation. From 2000 to 2009, 538 carcasses were retrieved by WYDOT maintenance forces.



The Wyoming DOT (WYDOT) has always faced economic shortfalls in attempting to adequately solve the wildlife mortality problem. In 2009, the ARRA program provided a golden opportunity to provide the necessary funding. WYDOT initially met with state and federal agencies that included the Wyoming Game and Fish Department, the U.S. Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the US Fish and Wildlife Service and FHWA to coordinate a wildlife connectivity plan. This effort then bridged to outside research efforts provided by non-governmental organizations (NGO). These organizations included the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, the Biodiversity Conservation Alliance, the Greater Yellowstone Coalition, the Wyoming Outdoor Council, the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, and National Geographic. National Geographic created a video that documents their efforts in research. This video has been placed on WYDOT's web site. A considerable amount of research had been completed by these organizations, which helped layout crossing strategies throughout the entire state of Wyoming. Through this collaborative effort, WYDOT received letters of support from each of these organizations plus letters of support from the Western Environmental Law Center, the Wyoming Landscape Conservation Initiative and the Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative located in Alberta Canada.



Research determined the migratory routes for many species of wildlife. The migratory routes were basically constrained due to the natural topography of the region. This migratory corridor is contained by the Snake River Mountain Range to the west and the Wind River Mountain Range to the east. The headwaters of the Green River begins where these two mountain ranges converge. The migratory routes of the animals generally follow the pattern of the Green River and its tributaries. Research also validates that US 191 basically severs the migratory routes. This can be seen on the two attached maps. Previous research proves that underpasses are very effective with mule deer, but extremely ineffective with pronghorn antelope. The underpass solution for mule deer has been utilized throughout numerous locations around the country. However, research proves that this solution will not work for pronghorn antelope. They live in wide open habitat by necessity. They choose not to use constrictive underpasses and will revert to using other means for crossing. Research suggests that overpasses of 130 to 150 feet wide will be conducive to pronghorn antelope passage. These solutions are very expensive and have not been widely utilized throughout the world. WYDOT has decided to construct two 150 foot wide overpasses on US 191 to solve this problem. Six underpasses will be constructed at various locations in conjunction with two overpasses to accommodate big game movement. Construction is expected to be complete in 2012. The cost of this project is approximately 13 million dollars. These areas will be monitored after construction to determine their effectiveness.