Project Abstract

The Coyote Springs Wildlife Crossings project is located along United State Route 93 (US 93) from milepost 75.24 in Clark County to milepost 23 in Lincoln County, a distance of approximately 34 miles. The project would construct 61 wildlife crossings and 68 total miles of barrier fencing within critical habitat conservation areas essential to the recovery of the federally protected Mojave desert tortoise (*Gopherus agassizi*i).

The importance of vehicle-wildlife interaction is typically defined in terms of danger to human safety and property damage potential. This has resulted in a preoccupation with large animal vehicle-wildlife collision minimization and an underappreciation for the consequences for human safety and our Nation's wildlife resources associated with small animal vehicle-wildlife collisions. Providing safer roads in rural areas requires unique design considerations that coincide with the concerns of an area (e.g., minimizing vehicle-wildlife collisions). The Coyote Springs Wildlife Crossings project is uniquely designed to reduce overall vehicle-wildlife collisions and protect a threatened species while improving safety for US 93 roadway users.

Numerous studies have shown that crossings and barrier fencing can substantially mitigate desert tortoise habitat fragmentation due to highways and paved roads. This 34-mile segment of US 93 is the last remaining segment bisecting the critical habitat in Nevada to remain unfenced and without protected crossings. In addition to the threats posed by the highway, the impacts of climate change are expected to degrade some habitats. To facilitate movement between degraded and improved habitats, the Coyote Springs Wildlife Crossings project would allow the desert tortoise population in this area to maintain genetic connectivity and extensive average home range areas.

Additionally, these crossings will provide the opportunity for demographic rescue and thus higher population viability. Implementing barrier fencing with wildlife crossings may help reduce potential adverse environmental impacts and improving safety for roadway users of US 93.

The project is located in rural southern Nevada, with no communities immediately adjacent to the project. This project provides a unique opportunity to improve a rural, isolated area of Nevada and benefit the region.

NDOT has a long-standing reputation for providing opportunities for workforce development, job quality, and wealth creation. The contract requirements will include prevailing wage consisting of local Davis-Bacon prevailing wage requirements to provide an equal playing field for unionized contractors to be competitive with non-unionized contractors and guarantees workers will be compensated equally. In addition, NDOT will provide trainee hours on this project which offer opportunities for less-experienced workers to hone their crafts while providing a fair bidding situation amongst all interested contractors. The project will also provide opportunities for disadvantaged and minority business owners. Additionally, the project is within close proximity to the Moapa Indian Reservation and associated Moapa Band of Paiute Indians, providing nearby potential training and employment opportunities for their tribe and other local rural residents.

The proposed project will enhance driver safety while also protecting an endangered species. Driver avoidance of or a collision with a desert tortoise at high speeds can result in severe crashes, especially given the rural nature of the corridor.