

# MEMORANDUM

# State of Alaska

Department of Transportation & Public Facilities  
Statewide Design & Engineering Services Division

TO: Pat Kemp, P.E.  
Commissioner

DATE: August 1, 2013

THRU: Roger Healy, P.E.  
Chief Engineer

TELEPHONE NO: 465-8962  
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FROM: Jeff. Jeffers, P.E.,  
State Traffic & Safety Engineer

SUBJECT: Wildlife Working Group

Representatives of Alaska's departments of Transportation and Fish and Game drafted the attached Memorandum of Understanding creating a Wildlife Working Group relating to highways and wildlife. As collaborators on the MOU, we encourage the commissioners of both agencies to establish a cooperative Wildlife Working Group as a means for identifying cost-effective programmatic approaches affecting both highway safety and wildlife sustainability. We recommend your consideration and approval of the Wildlife Working Group through signing the MOU.

The Wildlife Working Group will:

- promote communication and shared research between our departments;
- generate recommendations to management useful for project development and system maintenance for areas where the need for wildlife mitigation is real but avoid unnecessary mitigation where there is little or no need; and
- present a united front on issues of concern to the public.

We note that MAP-21 contains numerous references addressing wildlife, both to mitigate the safety hazard to motorists presented by wildlife on the roads and to maintain wildlife habitats. "Wildlife" is listed:

- in the definition of Transportation Alternatives under environmental mitigation activities;
- among Eligible Projects under the Surface Transportation Program and among other project types eligible as safety improvement projects, as well as for reduction of vehicle-wildlife crashes on Tribal and Federal Lands; and
- for programmatic mitigation plans.

Our take on MAP-21 is that wildlife will increasingly require our attention during highway project development and M&O. The Wildlife Working Group is a proactive effort that will allow us to chart our own best course into the future with regard to highways and wildlife.

I will be happy to address any questions that arise as result of your review.

Attachment: ADOT-ADFG MOU

CC: Ben White, State Environmental Manager, HQ  
Mark Neidhold, P.E., Chief, Design and Construction Standards

**MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING**  
**between**  
**ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME**  
**and the**  
**ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND PUBLIC**  
**FACILITIES**  
**ESTABLISHING AND IMPLEMENTING A WILDLIFE AND HIGHWAYS**  
**WORKGROUP**

This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is established and entered into by and between the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, hereafter referred to as ADF&G, and the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities, hereafter referred to as ADOT&PF. This MOU establishes the Wildlife and Highways Workgroup which is composed of staff members from both ADF&G and ADOT&PF. The Wildlife and Highways Workgroup will consider sustainability of wildlife populations in the delivery of a safe, efficient, and economical statewide highway system.

**I. PURPOSE OF THE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING**

Formation of the Wildlife and Highways Workgroup benefits both Departments by providing a mechanism to develop mutually beneficial and effective solutions that proactively balance habitat connectivity and a safe and efficient highway transportation system. Financial and societal costs are associated with wildlife-vehicle collisions along Alaska highways. In addition, these collisions diminish the sustained use of wildlife resources. Reducing the frequency and/or severity of wildlife-vehicle collisions benefits the wildlife resources and the people of Alaska. Appropriately designed projects and incorporated mitigation measures optimize vehicle safety, habitat connectivity, wildlife sustainability, and cost effectiveness.

Wildlife populations decline for multiple reasons; negative wildlife highway interactions are one potential cause. When these populations decline there is social and political pressure to restore healthy populations. If the development and maintenance of a highway transportation system fails to consider wildlife populations proactively, then after-the-fact modifications or additional infrastructure would be considerably more difficult and expensive to implement.

This MOU is intended to establish a coordinated and collaborative relationship between ADF&G and ADOT&PF; henceforth the two agencies will be referred to in this document as the "Departments". The Wildlife and Highways Workgroup will provide management in both Departments with recommendations and information for decision making, including development and implementation of policies and procedures. The purpose of the Wildlife and Highways Workgroup is to:

- To promote human safety, efficient transportation, and economical ways to plan, design, construct, and manage Alaska's highways while reducing negative impacts to terrestrial wildlife populations of significant Alaska management interest.
- To share and use wildlife information, traffic data, and other resources.

- To implement the objectives and goals established by the Wildlife and Highways Workgroup.

This MOU serves as a bridge between the two Departments. This MOU also defines the roles, responsibilities, and authorities of both Departments with respect to the general objectives and goals which ADF&G and ADOT&PF have mutually agreed upon. This MOU serves the mutual interest of ADF&G, ADOT&PF, and the public by facilitating the identification of cost-effective best management practices through research and experience.

## **II. DESCRIPTION OF THE WORKGROUP**

Both Departments will be represented by members that will be assigned by and have the support of their respective Commissioner (or their designee). The Wildlife and Highways Workgroup will consist of a minimum six (6) members [three (3) from each Department]; other agencies, organizations, or groups may serve in an advisory capacity over time as the Wildlife and Highways Workgroup deems necessary.

## **III. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE WILDLIFE AND HIGHWAYS WORKGROUP:**

The Wildlife and Highways Workgroup members will collaborate and share knowledge for the purpose of developing recommendations to the management of both Departments (such as but not limited to the following: policy, decision making, education, and outreach).

The Wildlife and Highways Workgroup will meet on a consistent and regular basis, no less than four (4) times per year, or as necessary. The Wildlife and Highways Workgroup will convene annually for a face to face conference at a minimum once a year.

- a. ADF&G and ADOT&PF mutually agree to:
  1. Promote early coordination and collaboration between the Departments during all phases of project development and facility maintenance (such as but not limited to: planning, agency scoping, and vegetation management).
  2. Promote coordination and collaboration between the Departments, and to advise and inform others as needed (e.g., other State Agencies, Federal Agencies, local governments, non-governmental organizations, etc.).
  3. Identify, develop, and communicate cost-effective approaches for avoiding, minimizing, or mitigating impacts to wildlife, and habitat connectivity from highway infrastructure.
  4. Consider transportation corridor permeability as it affects population connectivity for wildlife.
  5. Recognize alternative methods and innovative techniques (e.g., “hot-spot” hunts) for managing wildlife movement and distribution and addressing wildlife / highway conflict mitigation.
  6. Work collaboratively to identify Alaska-specific data and research needs and opportunities in order to promote the use of technology and best management practices for reducing negative impacts of highway infrastructure to wildlife.

7. Facilitate discussions within the Departments and with others that consider the effects of proposed mitigation strategies for wildlife/highway conflicts.
8. Inform decision-makers within both Departments of successful practices and mitigation strategies and the importance of early consideration of wildlife on transportation projects.
9. Develop a programmatic approach to wildlife habitat connectivity and the state highway program.

b. Roles and Responsibilities of ADF&G:

1. ADF&G will fund staff participation in the Wildlife and Highways Workgroup. ADF&G will also fund staff participation during the development of transportation projects and facility maintenance, with a focus on the consideration of wildlife population sustainability. ADF&G will focus on its statutory and regulatory authority, recognizing that there may or may not be overlap with ADOT&PF jurisdiction in the road corridor.
2. In addition to ADOT&PF, ADF&G will cooperatively work with partners that play an integral role in transportation projects and facility maintenance, including, but not limited to, adjacent landowners, Federal agencies, Department of Public Safety, and non-governmental organizations (NGO's).
3. ADF&G will actively participate in the planning and design of transportation projects that may affect the sustainability of wildlife populations.
4. ADF&G will actively participate in maintenance of wildlife mitigation measures associated with transportation facilities that may affect the sustainability of wildlife populations.
5. ADF&G will gather, compile, and provide available wildlife movement, population, and habitat data in a timely fashion to inform decision-making.
6. ADF&G will serve in an advisory role to assist in the gathering of additional data should the need arise.

c. Roles and Responsibilities of ADOT&PF:

1. ADOT&PF will fund staff participation in the Wildlife and Highways Workgroup.
2. ADOT&PF will consider wildlife population sustainability, such as but not limited to, habitat connectivity, as a factor during the planning and design of transportation projects and facility maintenance, as appropriate to the scale and location of activities.
3. ADOT&PF will work collaboratively with ADF&G, landowners, Department of Public Safety, Federal agencies, and NGOs to incorporate sustainability of wildlife populations as appropriate into the planning and design of transportation projects and facility maintenance.
4. ADOT&PF will gather, compile, and provide traffic and highway crash data in a timely fashion to assist in decision-making.
5. ADOT&PF will provide ADF&G sufficient time during the initial planning and design of transportation projects and development of any program approaches to facility maintenance to review information, and to assist in the development of alternatives that consider wildlife population sustainability.

6. ADOT&PF is committed to collaborate with ADF&G early in the planning process to help determine appropriate study areas and data collection (corridor studies, joint research projects, consultant work, etc.).

**IV. ASSESSMENT AND DURATION OF AGREEMENT:**

The Wildlife and Highways Workgroup will at a minimum perform one (1) self-assessment annually. The Wildlife and Highways Workgroup will use the self-assessment to determine the effectiveness of the Wildlife and Highways Workgroup, and identify measures to improve the Wildlife and Highways Workgroup. The Department signatories agree that periodic self-assessments are vital in determining how well the functions and intentions of this MOU and the Wildlife and Highways Workgroup are being met.

This Agreement shall continue in force until such time that either Commissioner (ADF&G or ADOT&PF) provides written notice of termination one hundred and twenty days (120) in advance of the termination date.

**V. DISPUTE RESOLUTION:**

Should disagreement arise within the Wildlife and Highways Workgroup on the interpretation of the provisions of this MOU, or as amended, that cannot be resolved, the area(s) of disagreement will be stated in writing by either party and presented to the other party for consideration. This process shall take no longer than thirty (30) days. If agreement on interpretation is not reached within an additional thirty (30) days from exchange of the written interpretation(s), the parties may then move forward to jointly elevate the discussion within each of the Departments to a designated authority.

**VI. SIGNATURES:**

8/21/13  
Date

Cora Campbell  
Commissioner  
Alaska Department of Fish and Game

8/2/13  
Date

[Signature]  
Commissioner  
Alaska Department of Transportation  
and Public Facilities