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*For Immediate Release*

## **Slow Down for Wildlife!**

**Thursday, December 7, 2017, Jackson, WY** – Teton County, the Town of Jackson, and the Wyoming Department of Transportation (WYDOT) are partnering with multiple local agencies and non-profit organizations to raise public awareness about the danger, frequency, and cost of wildlife-vehicle collisions.

The winter season of December to March is the highest-risk time of year for collisions with wildlife – more than 50% of all annual collisions take place during this period. Over the course of the last year, over 500 animals were killed due to collisions in Teton County.

The monetary and ecological costs of these collisions are considerable: the Jackson Hole Wildlife Foundation estimates that the cost of wildlife-vehicle collisions from May 2016 to April 2017 was more than \$3 million. In addition, the regional ecosystem suffers from the amount of wildlife fatalities that occur every year.

“It is critically important that drivers are aware of the increased risk of wildlife collisions throughout the valley in the winter months,” said Amy Ramage, Engineering Manager at Teton County. “As we work collaboratively with the community to identify long-term strategies to deal with this issue, the best thing a driver can do is be aware, drive cautiously, and slow down.”

Ramage is helping to coordinate the Wildlife Crossings Master Plan process, a project that has worked to analyze all options for reducing wildlife-vehicle collisions, including speed limit reductions, roadside signage, and permanent wildlife crossing infrastructure. Public input and collaboration with local conservation groups have informed the plan, which is currently in draft form.

The Wildlife Crossings Master Plan process is primarily focused on long-term solutions, but stakeholders are currently working on short-term solutions and increased public awareness. “It’s very important to identify permanent, long-term solutions for this problem, but in the meantime, there are steps we can take as a community to help the situation right now,” said Carl Pelletier, Public Information Officer for the Town of Jackson. “We’ve been working with

WYDOT and local law enforcement on new signage and speed limits on Broadway, and we've been collaborating with the County on a public awareness campaign that involves a variety of printed and electronic materials."

"We really just want to get the message out to drivers to be careful and slow down, especially at night," Pelletier continued. "Drivers may think that there is less risk when driving in Jackson, but wildlife corridors exist right within the Town limits."

The speed limit change on Broadway was recently approved by the Jackson Town Council to address the high-risk, collision "hot-spot" zone from the Flat Creek/Pearl/Broadway intersection all the way to the "Y" (Highway 22 intersection near Albertson's). The new speed limit on this stretch is 30mph (down from 35mph). Reduced speeds allow drivers to come to a stop faster when wildlife is present in the roadway and significantly reduce the severity of collisions, or avoid them altogether.

The Town of Jackson and Teton County both have online resources available related to wildlife-vehicle collision statistics, the Wildlife Crossings Master Plan, and other helpful information. On the Town of Jackson's website, simply follow this link in the upper-left corner:



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