



New Mexico DEPARTMENT OF
TRANSPORTATION
MOBILITY FOR EVERYONE

US 550 Wildlife Crossing Project

Jim Hirsch & Trent Botkin
NMDOT Environmental Bureau



The Top 5 Wildlife-Vehicle Collision Hotspots

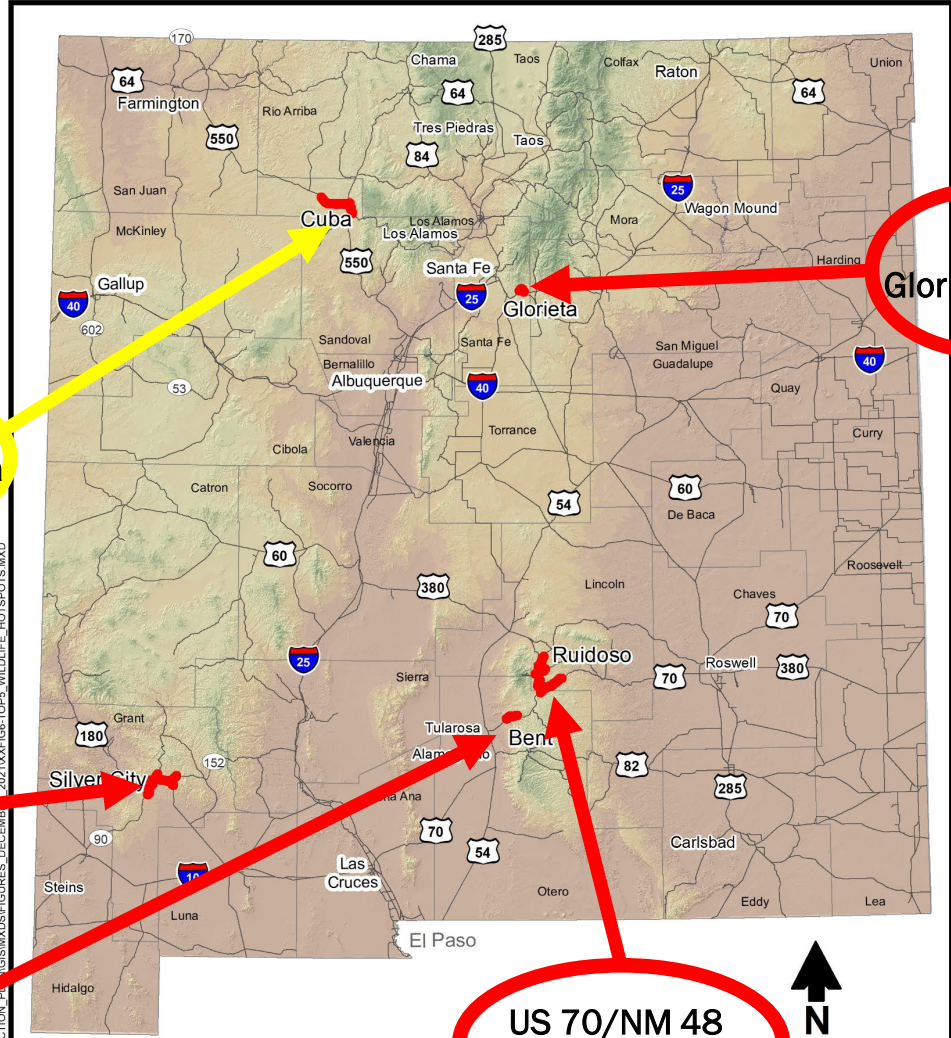
US 550
North of Cuba

I-25
Glorieta Pass

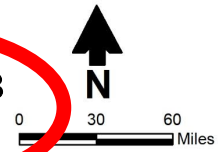
US 180/NM 90
Silver City

US 70 Bent

US 70/NM 48
Ruidoso



Explanation
 Top 5 vehicle collision hotspot



NMDOT WILDLIFE CORRIDORS ACTION PLAN
**Top 5 Wildlife Vehicle Collision Hotspots
 recommended for mitigation**



**New Mexico Wildlife Corridors
Action Plan**

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US 550

Wildlife Crossings Project

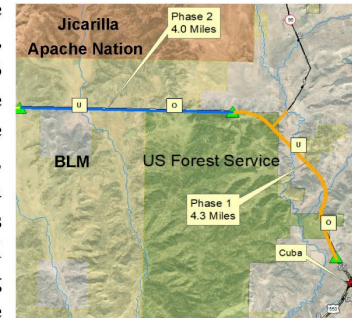
Bridging the (Continental) Divide



DESCRIPTION

The US 550 Wildlife Crossings project presents an unprecedented opportunity to drastically reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions and restore connectivity for wildlife in the vicinity of the continental divide near Cuba, NM. Averaging 6,000+ vehicles per day, this stretch of US 550 bisects 16 miles of National Forest, Bureau of Land Management, Jicarilla Apache Nation, and Private lands, yet it remains an important wildlife corridor for Rocky Mountain elk, mule deer, black bear, mountain lion, and bobcat. **This was designated as the #1 priority project within the New Mexico Statewide Wildlife Corridors Action** because its impact on improving safety in critical corridors for motorists and wildlife. This is an opportunity to showcase New Mexico as an emerging national leader and garnering support for future collaborative wildlife crossing projects. Phase 1 and 2 of the project will include two wildlife underpasses and **two wildlife overpasses, which will be the first designated wildlife overpass ever constructed in New Mexico.**

LOCATION



Wildlife Overpass



Game Fence



STATUS

Fall 2024

Spring 2025

Fall 2025

Summer 2026

CONCEPT

30% DESIGN

60% DESIGN

90% DESIGN

CONSTRUCTION



The final design is expected to be completed in the fall of 2025, with the opportunity to go to construction in 2026

US 550 Wildlife Crossing Project Area



US 550 Wildlife Crossing Project Wildlife-vehicle Collision Summary

Reported Data 2009 - 2023:

- 208 Total Wildlife-vehicle Collisions*
 - 120 Elk
 - 82 Deer
 - 5 Black Bear
 - 1 Mountain Lion

*Studies have indicated that reported data represents only 1/3 of actual number wildlife-vehicle collisions

Factors:

- WVCs/mile/year = 1.21
- Benefit to other species besides big game
- Landownership = BLM, USFS, & Jicarilla Apache Nation

Existing Drainage Structure



Wildlife Underpass



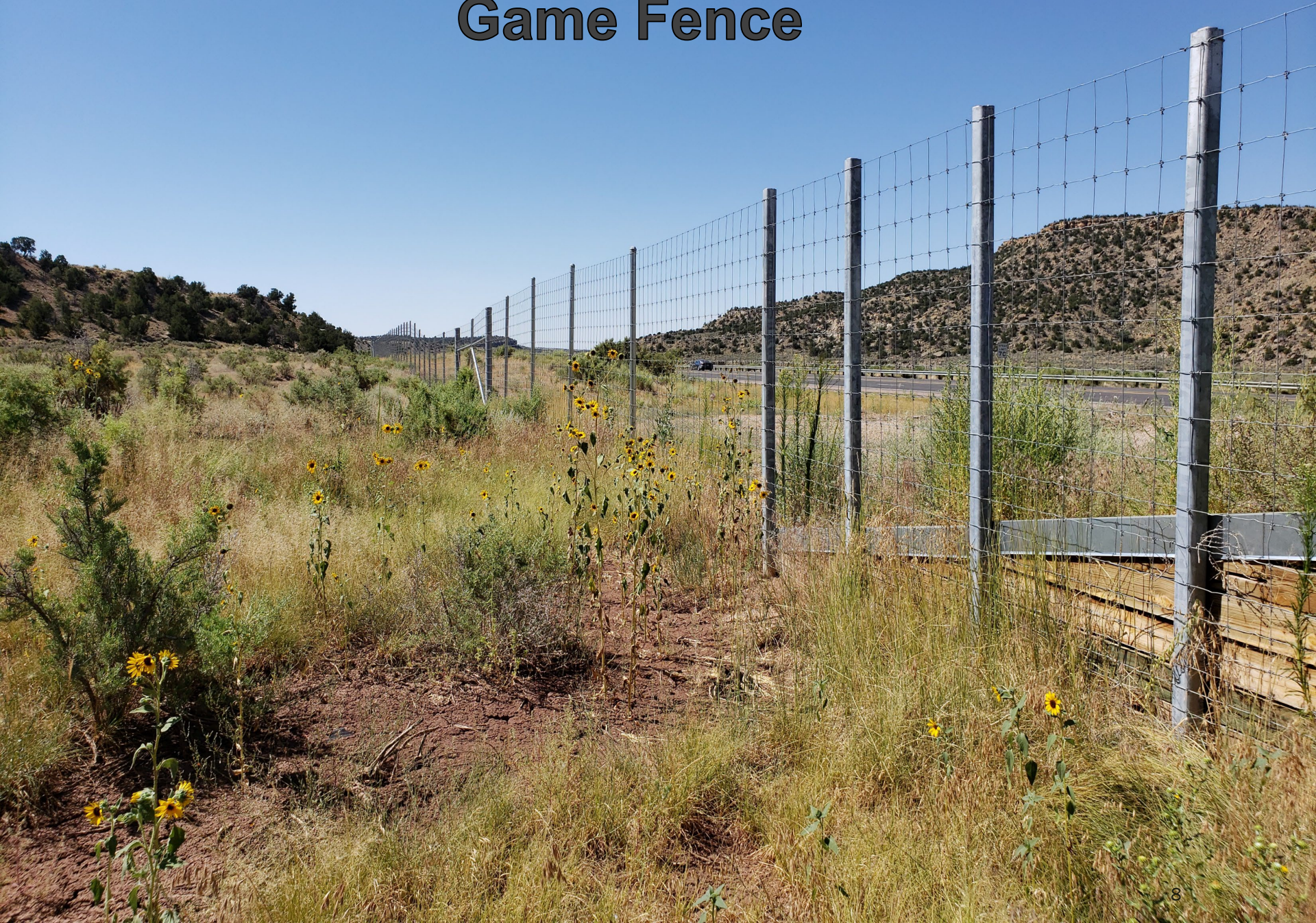
Existing Roadway



Wildlife Overpass



Game Fence



Game Guard (Double Cattle Guard)



Funding to Date		
Appropriation	Amount	Notes
Laws of 2022	\$ 2,000,000.00	Being used for US 550 design
Laws of 2023	\$ 5,000,000.00	Partial being used for US 550 design
Laws of 2024	\$ 5,000,000.00	State fund match for federal grant application
	\$ 12,000,000.00	
Spent to Date		
US 550 Phase I/II design	\$ 3,500,000.00	Complete in Fall 2025
Balance	\$ 8,500,000.00	
Legislative Funding Needed		
Phase I Construction	\$ 10,000,000.00	Est. state fund match for 26 million FHWA wildlife crossing pilot program
Phase II Construction	\$ 35,000,000.00	Begin in 2026
Total	\$ 45,000,000.00	
Legislative Support	\$ 36,500,000.00	