Tijeras Canyon Safe Passage Coalition
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Issues
- Motorist safety is an urgent concern due to frequent wildlife-related accidents along the section of Interstate 40 that passes through Tijeras Canyon, east of Albuquerque.
- I-40 and Route 66 are dangerous barriers for wildlife that cause unwanted roadkill, and effectively isolate certain wildlife populations.
- There is a need for effective wildlife crossings and fencing to funnel animals safely across the highway, so they are less likely to wander into harm’s way and cause deadly accidents.
- Development associated with I-40 continues to consume, fragment and degrade important habitats.

Facts
- Approximately 800 accidents involving vehicles and game animals are reported in New Mexico yearly.
- The United States has 4 million miles of roadways, on which an estimated one million vertebrates die every day. Motorists traveling I-40 and Route 66 accidentally hit and injure or kill: deer, black bears, cougars, coyotes, bobcats, foxes, and skunks, as well as cats and dogs.
- I-40 has the heaviest volume of freight traffic in New Mexico: eight to nine thousand heavy trucks travel through Tijeras Canyon daily.
- Genetic research conducted by Brad MacRae at Northern Arizona University identified this region as an important “genetic contact zone” for two genetically distinct cougar populations; I-40 is a significant barrier to their dispersal.
- Tijeras Canyon has been identified as one of the most endangered wildlife linkages in North America, and is a top priority for mitigation in NM.

Solutions
- Design and implement crossings/fencing for wildlife passage and motorist safety.
- Protect and restore habitat adjacent to the transportation corridor for wildlife and aesthetics.
- Educate and involve the public on wildlife/vehicle conflicts, safety and conservation issues.
- Cooperation between NM Department of Transportation, NM Game and Fish, Cibola N.F., local land owners, and non-profit organizations to effectively address this issue.

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