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## **Jackson Hole Wildlife Foundation, Wyoming Department of Transportation and Teton County Team Up to Grab Drivers' Attention in Wilson**

**Jackson, WY** –This week the Wyoming Department of Transportation (WYDOT) will be installing two radar speed feedback signs along the east and west bound lanes on WY 22 in Wilson. The purchase and installation of these signs was facilitated through a partnership with WYDOT, Jackson Hole Wildlife Foundation (JHWF), and Teton County. These new signs will be installed near existing 25 mph speed limit signs and will display an oncoming vehicle's speed. They will flash a strobe light if the vehicle is violating the posted speed limit.

"These signs are intended to provide greater incentive to motorists to mind their speed while driving through Wilson with the aim to improve safety, including reducing wildlife-vehicle collisions," said Amy Ramage, Teton County Engineer.

**Update on WY 390.** Now that radar speed feedback signs have been installed on WY 22 in Wilson, the partners will turn their attention to concerns about signs on WY 390. The four dynamic radar speed limit signs currently placed along WY 390 have reached their lifecycle and are not functioning as they should and the top portion for the posted speed limit has been temporarily turned off. The bottom portion remains reflecting the speed of the approaching motorist. WYDOT, JHWF, and Teton County are working to identify permanent replacements which will better capture driver attention, while conforming to the day and nighttime speed regulations.

**Wildlife-Vehicle Conflicts on WY 390.** Recently, several moose have been struck by vehicles and killed along WY 390. This is not an unusual pattern, as moose are common along the Village Road and in the fall migratory moose begin moving toward winter range and may join year-round resident moose in the area, increasing the number of animals present near WY 390. Also, the animals can become distracted during the breeding season and may pay less attention to their own safety when crossing roads.

In 2010-2011—the worst moose-vehicle collision year on record in Teton County—33 moose-vehicle collisions were recorded in the county over a 12-month period. An average year experiences ~18 moose-vehicle collisions in Teton County. "This is a significant concern for sustaining a healthy moose herd in Jackson Hole that is only several hundred strong at best," warned Renee Seidler, Executive Director of JHWF.

**Risk from Wildlife-Vehicle Collisions.** Due to their sheer size, dark coat, and their long legs, moose are a big safety concern for motorists. Most of their mass sits high above the ground and their immense bodies can come crashing through the windshield or roof of a car. In addition,

moose are an iconic species in Jackson Hole and are of economic importance in a county that relies in part on wildlife-watching tourism to build its budget. Wildlife-vehicle collisions rightfully catch the attention of locals, agencies, and conservation organizations.

In response to recent collisions and concerned voices from the community, Teton County, WYDOT, Wyoming Game and Fish Department, JHWF and other conservation partners and decision makers are examining new ways to address the problem. Short-term action items for WY 390 are being discussed in these meetings and at County Commission meetings.

“WYDOT has past data to compare against and will monitor over the next several years if driver behavior has changed with the use of these radar feedback signs,” said Darin Kaufman WYDOT District 3 Traffic Engineer.

### ***Safe Driving Tips for Avoiding Wildlife-Vehicle Collisions.***

- Be aware and attentive when driving
- Do not exceed the posted speed limit
- Drive with extra caution at dawn, dusk, and night as these times are when animals are most active and yet hardest to see
- Use high beams at night when there is not oncoming traffic
- Wear a seatbelt
- Keep a safe distance between you and the driver in front of you
- Scan the edges of the road for wildlife in addition to the road surface
- Know that animals are more likely to be found where creeks cross under roads or are adjacent to the road (know where the riparian areas are)
- If an animal crosses the road, look for and expect other animals to follow
- If there is an animal in the road in front of you, do not swerve as this can reduce driver control over the vehicle, rather brake and keep your wheels pointed straight
- If an impact is inevitable, try to release your brakes just at the moment of impact, this will scoop the front of the car up higher than when you are braking and help keep the struck animal from coming over the hood of the car

### ***What is the worst day for wildlife-vehicle collisions in the United States?***

The worst day for wildlife-vehicle collisions in the US is typically centered around Daylight Savings in the fall. At this time, ungulates—hoofed mammals like deer, elk and moose—are migrating toward winter range, it is their breeding season “the rut,” and it is hunting season, which can all cause animals to move more, move faster, and be more distracted. On top of all that, humans change our normally predictable schedule of commuting along roads. This single change of an hour adds further confusion for animals that have habituated to vehicle patterns along a particular road.

*The Jackson Hole Wildlife Foundation works to promote ways for our community to live compatibly with wildlife.*