

# ACCESSING FEDERAL FUNDING FOR WILDLIFE MIGRATION PROJECTS

---

## *A TOOLKIT FOR WYOMING*

The conservation of big game migration corridors is critical to the longevity of the animals that utilize those corridors. Wildlife species – big game specifically – are central to Wyoming’s economy and sense of identity. It is largely thanks to these wildlife species and the open spaces that support them that people live in Wyoming. To prevent the destruction of migration corridors and protect the animals that rely on them, western states have invested millions of dollars in land conservation, roadway crossings, and other measures. To protect these corridors, states and local governments rely heavily on funding from their own budgets. A comprehensive protection strategy can access federal funding sources to reduce the burden on state and local coffers. This toolkit collects information that can help state and local entities access federal funding for migration corridor conservation.

By supporting the health of big game populations, migration corridors benefit Wyoming’s economy by encouraging national park attendance, hunting, and other recreational opportunities. Recreation in Wyoming accounted for more than \$5 billion in consumer spending for 2018.<sup>1</sup> In one survey conducted that same year, Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks visitors ranked seeing wildlife as the second most common reason to visit both parks.<sup>2</sup> National Park visitors spend a tremendous amount of money in the state, some of which helps fund conservation and wildlife restoration projects. In 2019, Wyoming sold over 70,000 mule deer hunting licenses, 65,000 antelope licenses and 70,000 elk licenses, accounting for more than \$30 million in state revenue.<sup>3</sup> Protecting migration corridors supports state revenue as well as local Wyoming businesses.

In February 2020, Governor Gordon signed the Wyoming Mule Deer and Antelope Migration Corridor Protection Executive Order to promote and improve state wildlife migration projects. Pursuant to the Executive Order, three Local Area Working Groups addressed ways to refine and strengthen the corridor designation process in the Sublette, Baggs, and Platte Valley areas. The groups considered boundary designations, risk assessments, and impacts on local revenue, jobs, and ongoing or proposed projects. Based on their findings, each working group issued a final report to the Governor summarizing their recommendations. The final reports from the three Local Area Working Groups all recommend increased funding, ongoing funding, and flexible funding for supporting projects in their areas. However, the reports do not address how to

---

<sup>1</sup> USDA FS Intermountain Region, Sharing a Sustainable Recreation Future for Wyoming National Forests 1 (2018), [https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE\\_DOCUMENTS/fseprd951309.pdf](https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/fseprd951309.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> Nat’l Park Service, Summer 2018 Visitor Use Surveys 19 (2018), [https://www.nps.gov/yell/learn/management/upload/2018-Yellowstone-Visitor-Use-Surveys-FINAL-REPORT\\_WEB-RESOLUTION.pdf](https://www.nps.gov/yell/learn/management/upload/2018-Yellowstone-Visitor-Use-Surveys-FINAL-REPORT_WEB-RESOLUTION.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> Wyoming Game and Fish Dep’t., 2019 Annual Reports of Big and Trophy Game Harvest, <https://wgfd.wyo.gov/Hunting/Harvest-Reports/2019-Harvest-Report>.

access federal funding, and many Wyoming state and local agencies lack the funding necessary to meet the Executive Order's mandates.

The federal government has set aside significant funds to support wildlife conservation projects. The numerous federal grants and programs available could help Wyoming residents, organizations and local government accelerate wildlife conservation projects. Interviews with state agencies, county planners, conservation districts, non-profits, attorneys and private landowners exposed several reasons why federal funds are not utilized. Inefficiency and lack of flexibility due to the strings attached to federal grants were common concerns. Long time frames, matching requirements, no guarantees of receiving funding despite time and effort put into a federal application, and lack of capacity to address these complications have also limited interest in pursuing federal funds. Ultimately, Wyoming residents and organizations often do not take the maximum advantage of the available federal opportunities because the costs of obtaining those resources appear to outweigh their benefits.

Those interviewed preferred state funds. State funds are seen as more readily accessible, and the timelines for securing such funds and completing projects are often seen as more reasonable. Additionally, with state funds, applicants perceive a higher guarantee of funding approval and overall fewer strings attached. On an interpersonal level, the apparent ease of the local, neighborly trust fostered by state funding relationships is appealing. Based on this, state and local agencies have commonly found it far more practical to look no further than Wyoming when it comes to funding wildlife migration corridor projects.

Having a trusted player within the state to help distribute federal funding might also accelerate the flow of federal funding to projects across the state. The Wyoming Wildlife and Natural Resource Trust (WWNRT) might be able to serve in this role. WWNRT operates as a trust account which disperses money for state wildlife and natural resources projects. By Wyoming statute, WWNRT's trust account is specifically intended to accept and disburse federal funds for these wildlife and natural resources projects.<sup>4</sup> WWNRT could potentially help Wyoming state and local agencies access federal funding by acting as a pass-through for certain federal grants. This sort of pass-through operation is considered in the statute creating WWNRT.

This toolkit aims to break down some of the barriers to using federal funds by providing a centralized information resource for Wyoming residents, organizations and local governments interested in conservation of wildlife corridors. It discusses the variety of available federal funding for wildlife conservation and how to apply for such funds. The toolkit provides three helpful reference tools:

---

<sup>4</sup> Wyo. Stat. Ann. § 9-15-103 (2022).

[Potential Partnerships\\*](#) for a non-exhaustive list of potential non-profits and private foundations for local coordination and partnership opportunities;

[Federal Funding Spreadsheet\\*](#) for a non-exhaustive list of federal grants for wildlife projects (including amounts available, estimated timelines, eligibility requirements, and where to apply); and

[Potential Matching Sources\\*](#) for a non-exhaustive list of potential sources to meet matching requirements.

## I. INCENTIVES TO USE FEDERAL FUNDING

“People in Wyoming love their wildlife and love their jobs, and we can do both. We are leading the nation in this effort.” - Governor Gordon, February 14, 2020.

Wyoming Leadership: Wyoming is a leader in the nation’s wildlife migration corridor efforts and helped inspire the recent increase in available funds specifically for these wildlife-related projects. While Wyoming has traditionally relied on state funding for wildlife conservation, accessing federal funds can help landowners and local governments accomplish local goals more quickly. Federal funds are available to implement local and state priorities.

Conservation of State Resources: Tapping into federal funding conserves Wyoming’s resources. This benefits the state in many ways, one being the conservation of funds for potential non-federal matching requirements (see Non-Federal Matching Funds section below).

Potential Partnerships & Local Coordination: Wyoming values its ability to rely on its local relationships. WWNRT may be able to help connect certain federal funding to local priorities. See [Potential Partnerships\\*](#) for a list of potential non-profits and private foundations for local coordination and partnership opportunities.

- NOTE: Recommendation for Private Landowners: Call your local conservation district and the Wyoming Game & Fish Department if you are interested in working to conserve corridors on your land. The agencies may help provide direction for partnerships and the local coordination necessary for getting your project off the ground.

---

\* These non-exhaustive lists are based on information available as of the date of this toolkit.

\* These lists are based on information currently available as of the date of this toolkit. The lists do not claim to be exhaustive.

Ongoing Projects Looking for Funding: There are numerous proposed wildlife migration projects across the state. Federal funding may be able to accelerate completion of some of these projects. The Wyoming Wildlife and Roadways Implementation Team (WWRIIT) has produced a [Statewide Priorities List](#) that includes over forty ongoing wildlife migration projects. Some have seen little to no action, others are partially funded, and several are waiting on final grants to complete funding. The Governor’s Local Area Working Groups relied on WWRIIT’s priority list when analyzing needs and issuing recommendations, acknowledging the need for additional funding. For a general idea on where ongoing projects are focused, see the following maps of the three designated corridors: [Sublette](#); [Baggs](#); and [Platte Valley](#).

## II. FEDERAL FUNDING

There are currently dozens of potential federal grants available for Wyoming’s wildlife projects. See [Federal Funding Spreadsheet\\*](#) for a list of potential federal grants. These grants can be used for different purposes, including habitat conservation or improvement, highway crossings, research on wildlife or migration, enhancement of recreation opportunities, and more. Note that the columns can be sorted in various ways, such as by application deadline, average funding, or key words. Visit [www.sam.gov](http://www.sam.gov) for current information. To explore all available grants, look under “Assistance Listings.”

Eligibility: See [Federal Funding Spreadsheet\\*](#) for eligibility requirements.

- **Eligible Applicant**: Look to this column to determine if you are potentially eligible for a federal grant. Eligible applicants range from private landowners to larger state agencies. “State” includes state subdivisions and agencies. “Non-profits” includes 501(c)(3) organizations.
- **Eligible Areas**: Look to this column to determine what land may be eligible for a given grant. Many grants have no stipulations, while others are specific to private lands, Bureau of Land Management lands, or other state or federally owned lands.
- **Eligible/Ineligible Projects**: Look to these columns to determine whether your project may be eligible for a given federal grant. If your project is not currently eligible for a grant, these columns may also indicate what steps may be necessary to obtain eligibility. Considerations include purpose, substance, location, scope, partnerships, matching, community involvement, and meeting statutory requirements.

Time Frame: Average application time, average commitment time, and application deadlines are listed in the [Federal Funding Spreadsheet\\*](#). Based on the current list of federal grants, the average time it takes to process an application ranges from 1-3 years. Once approved, the commitment for

---

\* These lists are based on information currently available as of the date of this toolkit. The lists do not claim to be exhaustive.

a project can be permanent. Commitment time refers to the time following the application during which the sponsoring agency must meet obligations. For projects that are permanent, such as conservation easements under the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program, the sponsoring agency must ensure that there are permanent monitoring practices in place. Many grants require no commitment time while others involve a permanent commitment. These time frames are important to consider in determining which grant is most appropriate for you and your project's purposes.

Other Considerations: In determining which federal grant to apply for, or whether federal funding is generally appropriate for your project, eligibility and time frame factors should be weighed against the following additional considerations:

- Staff capacity and turnover;
- Fiscal year;
- Budget process;
- Matching (see “Matching Funds” section below).

How to Apply: Follow the links to [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov) in the [\*Federal Funding Spreadsheet\\*\*](#) to access the online applications. Please note that you may need to check the box for “closed” (located on the left side of the page) for your specific grant to appear.

Questions: Contact information is provided in the [\*Federal Funding Spreadsheet\\*\*](#). Visit [www.sam.gov](http://www.sam.gov) or [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov) for more details and contact information.

### **III. NON-FEDERAL MATCHING FUNDS**

Many federal grants require non-federal matching. Securing funds to meet non-federal matching requirements can be a relatively easy process, particularly for smaller projects. Based on interviews conducted for this toolkit, this is particularly true in Wyoming. Accessing non-federal funds has historically been a relatively efficient process with high guarantees and workable timelines, both benefiting from and strengthening local coordination and partnerships. Securing federal funds can help state funds go further.

Matching requirements, listed as a percentage of total project cost, are listed in the [\*Federal Funding Spreadsheet\\*\*](#). Currently, non-federal matching requirements range from 20% to 50% of total project cost. There are also a number of federal grants that do not require matching. See below for a non-exhaustive list of potential non-federal matching sources.

---

*\* These lists are based on information currently available as of the date of this toolkit. The lists do not claim to be exhaustive.*

State Sources: The State of Wyoming and Wyoming State agencies offer many opportunities for matching. Reach out to your local contacts to see what is available.

Private Sources: There are countless opportunities to coordinate with private entities to secure non-federal matching. Wyoming is home to numerous non-governmental organizations with direct interest in local wildlife-related projects. A wide range of businesses also look for opportunities to engage with these projects. See [\*Potential Matching Sources\\*\*](#).

Other Sources: Consider looking to any of the following for non-federal matching:

The oil and gas sector and broader energy sector often set aside funds for wildlife mitigation. Insurance companies, car rental companies, and trucking/shipping companies all have an interest in wildlife projects that affect road and highway collisions. Such companies could serve as valuable partners for local wildlife conservation. See [\*Potential Matching Sources\\*\*](#).

### **Useful Websites:**

- NREX - allows users to see a map of migration corridors and existing conservation efforts.  
→ <https://nrex.wyo.gov/>
- Wyoming Game & Fish Department  
→ <https://wgfd.wyo.gov/Wildlife-in-Wyoming/Migration>
  - Wildlife Crossings - a collaborative effort by Wyoming Department of Transportation and Wyoming Game & Fish.  
→ <https://wgfd.wyo.gov/wildlife-in-wyoming/migration/roadways-initiative>
- Wyoming Governor's Local Area Working Groups  
Corridor Conservation Strategy - based on Governor Gordon's Executive Order, this is the central location for many conservation efforts, including the Local Working Groups. The Local Working Groups' final reports can be found here as well.  
→ <https://sites.google.com/view/wywildlifemigrationadvisorygrp/home>  
→ Baggs: <https://sites.google.com/view/wywildlifemigrationadvisorygrp/baggs-local-area-working-group>  
→ Platte Valley: <https://sites.google.com/view/wywildlifemigrationadvisorygrp/platte-valley-local-area-working-group>  
→ Sublette: <https://sites.google.com/view/wywildlifemigrationadvisorygrp/sublette-local-area-working-group>
- Wyoming Migration Initiative  
→ <https://migrationinitiative.org/>

- Wyoming Wildlife and Natural Resource Trust - manages a trust fund to provide money to wildlife and conservation projects around the state.  
→ <https://wwnrt.wyo.gov/>
- Wyoming Wildlife Federation - includes summary of the process to designate a corridor.  
→ <https://wyomingwildlife.org/how-is-a-corridor-designated/>
- Wyoming Wildlife Roadways Initiative - a collaborative effort by Wyoming Department of Transportation and Wyoming Game & Fish; includes the wildlife project Priority List.  
→ <https://wgfd.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=ef666ba292b74c56a339efc10fca5332>

**Toolkit Produced By:**

University of Wyoming College of Law; Energy, Environment & Natural Resources Practicum.

*Travis Brammer, Bryce Nichols, Hannah Mink – May 2022. Edited by Prof. Sharon Buccino and Cassie Williams.*

Completion of this toolkit would not have been possible without the time and insight of legal and other professionals across the state, including those employed by the Teton Conservation District, the Wyoming County Commissioners Association, the Wyoming Department of Transportation, and the Wyoming Game and Fish Department.