

American Society of Mammalogists

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Governor Dave Freudenthal
Chairman, Western Governors' Association
State Capitol Building
200 West 24th Street
Cheyenne, Wyoming 82002-0010

Dear Governor Freudenthal:

I am writing to you today expressing commendation by the American Society of Mammalogists for your efforts on the corridors initiative focused around "Path of the Pronghorn" in western Wyoming. The Society strongly supports efforts to protect this important migration corridor.

The American Society of Mammalogists is a non-profit, professional, scientific and educational Society consisting of nearly 3,000 members from all 50 of the United States and more than 60 other countries worldwide. Founded in 1919, the Society is the world's oldest and largest organization devoted to the study and conservation of mammals. As an organization, we strongly support the concept that conservation of wild mammals should be based on current, sound and accurate scientific knowledge. We have a long history of thoroughly reviewing issues related to mammalian conservation, including adopting positions on issues concerning the responsible management of mammals and their habitats. Our positions are uniformly based on scientific expertise developed by our members and other preeminent scientific professionals around the globe.

Long-distance animal migration is one of Earth's most stunning yet imperiled ecological processes. Within the Western Hemisphere, the pronghorn (*Antilocapra americana*) migration in and out of Grand Teton National Park is second in length only to the Porcupine caribou (*Rangifer tarandus*) herd migrations of northern Alaska and northwestern Canada. Pronghorn migrate up to 170 miles (274 km) from the Tetons into the Green River area near Pinedale, Wyoming (Sawyer and Lindzey 2000). Currently, the migration, and hence the viability, of pronghorn in Grand Teton National Park is jeopardized by large-scale energy development, increasing private land development, and unbalanced predator/prey relationships (Berger et al. 2001). Maintaining corridors and understanding migration mechanics are critical components of ensuring the persistence of this unique ecological process and the

large ungulate population it supports (Berger 2003). The loss of 75% of the migrations within the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem is a reminder of the importance of protecting those that remain (Berger 2004).

“Path of the Pronghorn” represents one of the most significant remaining large-mammal migrations in the world. It has occurred for at least 6,000 years (Miller and Saunders 2000). Biologists have documented the migration routes with GPS-collars on female pronghorn and now recognize a series of geographic bottlenecks that the pronghorn must traverse during this migration. As you know, in several locations these bottlenecks are extreme. Further plans for development of these narrow corridors threaten the persistence of this route. The loss of this route will result in the loss of pronghorn in Teton National Park, having potentially widespread ecological impacts to the park (Berger 2003). Conservationists, landowners, ranchers, and wildlife experts are working to preserve this migration, and government officials from Bridger-Teton National Forest, Grand Teton National Park, and the National Elk Refuge have recently signed a pledge of support.

The time to protect this migration corridor through a state-led initiative is now, because the loss of this route is almost guaranteed without the dedicated efforts of the leaders, including yourself, behind this corridor initiative. Thus, the American Society of Mammalogists fully supports efforts by your office to protect this corridor and feels the best way to safeguard the unique wildlife resources of this region including Grand Teton National Park, as well as the environmental quality of the Pinedale Anticline, is to add our voice of strong support to those from local and federal officials and call for the protection of the Path of the Pronghorn.

Respectfully yours,



Robert M. Timm, Ph.D.
President
American Society of Mammalogists

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