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Integrated training course for engineers and wildlife biologists

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INTEGRATED TRAINING COURSE FOR ENGINEERS AND WILDLIFE BIOLOGISTS

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Abstract

The need for a comprehensive (yet concise) training course on the basics of highway and wildlife interactions has become more apparent as more transportation engineers and wildlife biologists are faced with demands to consider wildlife mortality and connectivity issues and to incorporate wildlife crossing structures in highway projects.

The USDA Forest Service has developed an interagency, interdisciplinary two-day training session that walks engineers and biologists through the basics of habitat connectivity, impacts to wildlife from highways, effective mitigation measures, funding sources, and law and policy related to highway projects. This course, Innovative Approaches to Wildlife and Highway Interactions, has been designed to be taught by a wildlife biologist and a transportation engineer, with a target audience of mixed, mid-level professionals who are planning highway projects of various types.

The course was designed to integrate disciplines so that the challenging situations we face in highway projects can be innovatively solved and networking between agencies and disciplines is facilitated. The course is modular and based on the Wildlife Crossings Toolkit (<http://www.wildlifecrossings.info>), also developed by the USDA Forest Service, and current scientific works.

Eight sessions across the country have been completed since course development, with participants from eight state DOT's, FHWA, NGO's, state fish and wildlife agencies, FWS, and three federal resource agencies. Departments of transportation and resource agencies are welcome to host training sessions across the country with these training materials and instructors.

Funding for the course development was provided by the Coordinated Transportation Improvement Project fund, an interagency pooled fund.

Biographical Sketch: Sandra L. Jacobson, wildlife biologist/research and management liaison, Pacific Southwest Research Station, Redwood Sciences Laboratory, Arcata, California. Education: B.A. in zoology (1983), Humboldt State University, Arcata, California, and M.S. in natural resources/wildlife (1986), Humboldt State University. Jacobson has served as a wildlife biologist for the USDA Forest Service since 1980, working on three national forests at the district and forest levels in California and Idaho. She has worked for the USDI Fish and Wildlife Service, California Department of Fish and Game, and the USDA Soil Conservation Service. As the district wildlife biologist for the Bonners Ferry Ranger District on the Idaho Panhandle National Forests for 13 years, she managed grizzly bears, woodland caribou, and other threatened or endangered wildlife in an interagency and international setting. Ms. Jacobson is the lead biologist for the Wildlife Crossings Toolkit website. She is a charter member of the Transportation Research Board's Task Force on Ecology and Transportation and a team member for NCHRP 25-27's Evaluating the Effectiveness of Wildlife Crossing Structures. She is a member of the University of California-Davis Road Ecology Center's Scientific Advisory Committee. Currently, Ms. Jacobson is providing project-level technical expertise and training on wildlife and highway issues for several agencies around the country while acting as a research/management liaison at the Pacific Southwest Research Station.