

## **Montana US 93 South Wildlife Crossings Research**

MDT # HWY – 308445-RP

Quarterly Report August 1, 2008 – November 1, 2008

Submitted by Patricia Cramer

### Overview

Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) has installed several wildlife crossing structures along US 93 South of Missoula, and has plans to install several more over the coming years. This research project will be conducted from 2008 until 2015 along this stretch of US 93 to help determine the effectiveness of these wildlife crossings and associated fences. Through investigations in animal-vehicle collisions and animal crossing structure usage before and after construction, the level of efficacy of these measures will be evaluated. White-tailed deer will be the species of focus for this investigation. Other species' use of the structures and fatalities with vehicle collisions will also be included in the research analyses.

### Work Progress this Quarter

This was the first quarter of the research project. In September Dr. Cramer worked with Pat Basting the MDT biologist on the Missoula district to see what the project plans were for this stretch of US 93 where the research is to be conducted, and to conduct field reviews of potential camera sites. Data was obtained on the most recent project split proposals for upcoming road work on the overall project, and maps were generated to locate current and future wildlife crossings. Field visits to the sites helped elucidate what crossings were ready for camera installations immediately, and what crossings may have cameras installed at a later date. It was decided that cameras would be placed as soon as possible in existing crossings.

In October the kick off meeting for the project took place in Helena, Montana. The panel was briefed on Dr. Cramer's plans for the project and her questions were also addressed. See meeting notes for full review. After the meeting, Dr. Cramer met with other MDT employees who could help with data.

On October 10, Dr. Cramer installed the first camera of the study. The remainder of October was spent ordering equipment for the study. Kari Gunson, researcher on the project for analyzing a-v-c data also looked into a carcass database supplied by Pat Basting for US 93 South. She will be needing additional data from MDT in the coming weeks to more firmly continue her analyses.