



Linking Landscapes with Biological Corridors: Planning and Measures to Minimize the Impact of Highways on Arizona's Wildlife

Animals move across the landscape on a daily and seasonal basis to find what they need to survive: food, water, cover, and mates. Human-made barriers such as urban or deforested areas, highways, railroads and canals interrupt these patterns, and pose long-term threats to wildlife populations.

In a world where activities to connect humans fragment the habitats of other organisms, wildlife managers and regional planners have been accounting for biological corridors that link core blocks of habitat in designing urban and transportation networks for 20 years.

Norris Dodd, Senior Natural Resource Specialist for AZTEC Engineering Group, is internationally known for the type of work that allows officials to make informed decisions. He will bring over 40 years of experience in natural resource management, research, and administration to the March 11th SALT Speakers Series, in Rm B-117 in the Multigenerational Center in Apache Junction at 1035 N Idaho Rd. at 6:30 PM.



Highways are considered one of the most significant forces altering natural ecosystems and impacting biodiversity. Measures to increase the ability of animals to cross highways and to move safely along highways within corridors have been undertaken. These include over- and underpasses and wildlife passage structures, which both allow animals to move and increase public safety. Vehicular collisions and human/wildlife interactions lead to hundreds of millions of dollars in costs each year in the US. Maintaining wildlife populations also has economic and social value given the large contribution of wildlife-based recreation to the economy of Arizona.

Within Pinal County alone, 23 wildlife movement corridors between core habitat blocks and 7 riparian wildlife movement corridors have been identified. The talk will highlight how these linkage assessments have focused efforts to promote wildlife connectivity as part of highway construction projects in Arizona and in Asia.

Dodd's expertise in transportation and infrastructure projects runs the gamut from monitoring to planning to implementation. He has worked for AZTEC since 2008, excluding the 2-year period he worked for the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) to establish and oversee its statewide wildlife connectivity program. He retired from the Arizona Game and Fish Department after 29 years, in which he conducted a decade of road ecology/wildlife connectivity research, and helped pursue development of Arizona's 2006 statewide wildlife linkage assessment. He has been an international wildlife and biodiversity consultant to the Asian Development Bank since 2014, currently working in Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh where he has conducted wildlife connectivity studies. He is now overseeing design, construction, and monitoring of Asian elephant, Bengal tiger, and Asiatic one-horned rhino overpasses and underpasses. His academic degrees are from ASU, and he resides in Pinetop, AZ.

Dodd's talk is part of the SALT Speakers Series, which is co-sponsored by the Superstition Area Land Trust (SALT) and the Apache Junction Parks & Recreation Department. The series occurs on most 2nd and 4th Wednesdays, October-April at this time and location. ALL are free and geared for the public.

SALT is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization. You can learn more about us, what we do, and how to join and/or contribute at azsalt.org