



Highway Maintenance Manual
Chapter 07 Roadside Management
Section 15 Wildlife
Subject 05 Wildlife Crossings and Barriers

Bureau of Highway Maintenance
July 2015

1.0 Authority

Coordination with the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) are required for all state and federally funded projects.

[The Endangered Species Act 1973](#), as Amended (16 U.S.C. 1531-1543), provides for the conservation of threatened and endangered species of fish, wildlife, and plants by federal action and encourages the establishment of state programs. The Act prohibits unauthorized taking of endangered species and authorizes establishment of cooperative agreements. Section 7 of the Act requires federal agencies to ensure any action authorized, funded, or carried out by them does not jeopardize the continued existence of listed species or modify their critical habitat. If federally listed species are known to exist on a proposed site, the lead federal agency (FHWA in most cases), must initiate Section 7 consultation with the FWS to ensure the species and/or its critical habitat will not be adversely affected. The requirements for compliance are discussed in [FDM 24-20](#), Endangered Species

[s. 29.604 Wis. Stats.](#), Endangered and Threatened Species protected. This law designates responsibility to the state for conserving endangered and threatened plants and animals and for restricting the taking, possession, transportation, processing, or sale of endangered or threatened species to ensure their survival and propagation.

[NR 27](#), Endangered and threatened species. This is the Department of Natural Resources administrative rule.

[FDM 20-25-01](#), State and natural resource regulations, further describes the endangered and threatened species act.

[FDM 20-30-1.1](#), contains the DOT/DNR Cooperative agreement. This contains provisions for coordination and cooperation between the two agencies to ensure WisDOT maintenance and improvement project proposals adhere to state natural resource rules, laws and regulations.

2.0 Background

Animal/vehicle collision reduction efforts address two concerns: the safety of the motorist and the preservation and protection of wildlife crossing the highway. Nationally, Wisconsin consistently ranks high in human fatalities from vehicle collisions with wildlife.

Locations, species and methods best suited to reduce these collisions are identified in cooperation with other state and federal agencies. Over the years the department has constructed various structures such as earthen berms, earthen terraces under widened bridges or box culverts, motorist warning devices, barriers, openings in barriers, wildlife fencing and overpasses to aid in preventing these collisions. This increases highway safety by preventing animal/vehicle collisions and benefits the animals by protecting them from being harmed. These structures either prevent animals from crossing the roadway (e.g. tall fencing to prevent deer encroachment), help them get to the other side safely (e.g. culverts to allow animals to cross under the highway) or allow animals to continue their migration patterns but in restricted areas (openings in concrete barriers to allow animals to pass through). Crossing and barrier locations are normally determined during highway improvement or maintenance project coordination using crash information, public requests, or requests from the DNR liaison staff as criteria.

They may need periodic removal of obstructions, vegetation control, structural repairs or other maintenance in order to function as intended.

3.0 Guideline

Project scoping meetings provide an opportunity for maintenance details to become part of the project proposals. Locations and long-term maintenance requirements should be agreed upon and understood during meetings held prior to letting the work.

If the crossing or barrier is mandated by another agency such as the DNR or the FWS, the Regional Project Development Section should attempt to negotiate a Memorandum of Agreement (MOU) with the mandating agency to provide the maintenance of the structure.

Animal crossings and barriers should be inspected periodically. Since some bridges, fences, barriers or culverts may be constructed to also serve as wildlife crossings or barriers/protection devices, these inspections may be performed as part of the bridge, culvert or other inspection procedures. Work required maintaining the crossings or barriers to the original specifications should be performed as time permits. Work performed by the county should be charged to Activity Code 055 on the Routine Maintenance Agreement monthly invoice.

Animal crossing structures constructed within the highway right of way must adhere to FHWA clear zone requirements.

4.0 Locations

Some barriers designed for amphibians or reptiles are constructed very low to the ground and may be difficult for maintenance staff to see when located in tall grass. It is important to know the location of these structures for the safety of maintenance staff and to avoid damaging the structures or maintenance equipment. Contact the Bureau of Highway Maintenance (BHM) landscape architect or region maintenance supervisor for information regarding the location of crossings. Regional environmental analysis and review specialists and project development staff are responsible for making new locations known to the regional maintenance supervisor and BHM landscape architect.