



March 5, 2008

Dear AWL member,

Call it a field office, afield.

I am pleased to announce that American Wildlands has opened a new office in Dillon, Montana, and we hired a 30-year resident of southwest Montana and former federal biologist – Jim Roscoe – as our new High Divide regional field representative. Both Jim and our new office will give American Wildlands a timely and prominent presence in what has become one of our most critical regional wildlife corridors.

We chose to open an office far afield from our existing offices in Bozeman and Missoula simply because of the need to have someone living and working *in* the High Divide region. During the last year, American Wildlands conducted an assessment of the priority habitat connections (or “linkages”) across most of the U.S. Northern Rockies – including the High Divide region of southwest Montana and east-central Idaho. Through our “Priority Linkage Assessment” for the High Divide, we identified 31 linkage areas that need attention if we are going to maintain habitat connectivity in the lands between the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem and the vast wilderness lands of central Idaho. Certainly, a project and landscape of this size requires AWL to increase our capacity – hence our new hire and field office.

*To make the most of this timely need and opportunity, I am asking you to consider providing some “start-up” funding to help us open this new office, and expand our work in this critical regional wildlife movement corridor.*

To meet this need in the High Divide, American Wildlands has developed a multi-year strategy to provide the leadership, orchestration and resources needed by local conservation interests to maintain and restore these 31 wildlife corridors. To identify these critical linkages, AWL’s staff interviewed 25 state, federal and independent field biologists to get their professional, expert opinion regarding wildlife movements and critical habitat connections. This assessment focused on the movement needs of eight species – antelope, bighorn sheep, elk, grizzly bear, lynx, wolf and wolverine.

We are very fortunate to have hired one of the field biologists we interviewed. Jim Roscoe was looking for a change after 30 years with a federal agency, and both he and American Wildlands are thrilled to have found each other. In hiring Jim, we fulfilled the tall order we had established for ourselves in terms of what we were looking for in this hire. Specifically, we wanted to find someone who [1] has a strong biology background, [2] has a comprehensive understanding of federal and state land and wildlife management policies and practices, [3] is familiar and comfortable with the rural communities and culture of the High Divide, and [4] wanted to live in Dillon (located in the center of the region). We found all of that in Jim!



Now, we are well-situated to begin working with local community groups, conservation organizations and agencies to maintain wildlife corridors that will help conserve the High Divide's "old west" attributes of abundant wildlife and rural landscapes. Both of these "old wests" are threatened by the burgeoning "new west" development that is occurring as more people, appreciative of the region's wildlife, wildlands and rural landscapes, move to the region. This increased population – along with the associated development, roads, fences, and commercial areas – poses a serious threat to maintaining the very natural and cultural amenities people move here to enjoy.



To help conserve these values, American Wildlands will provide our conservation partners across the High Divide with:

- the "case" for why a given linkage warrants increased conservation attention, which will help locals understand the value of conserving their backyard as a critical link within a larger ecological and rural landscape;
- the leadership to facilitate these diverse conservation interests in developing and implementing a conservation strategy for each linkage area (including AWL helping identify what additional resources are needed to implement each strategy, and then helping secure those resources); and
- our own expertise regarding the best available science; GIS modeling, analysis and mapping; and land and wildlife management policies and best management practices.

With 31 linkage areas across the High Divide, we have a lot of work to do. A number of foundations have provided funding for this work during 2008. Yet, we still need \$4,000 to cover the costs associated with opening the Dillon office and initiating this new conservation project.

*That is why I am asking you and nearly 300 other AWL members to each contribute \$15 or more, so we can secure the last \$4,000 needed to fund the first six months of our new office. Your support will enable us to operate the new office without financially stressing our on-going conservation programs.*

Ultimately, our success in the High Divide will be measured by the ability for wildlife to migrate and live throughout the region, and the ability for local people to make deliberate choices about managing their land in a manner that conserves the wild and rural landscapes of the region – those "old west" attributes that make the Northern Rockies a unique natural and cultural environment.

This transition is a milestone for AWL, and will strengthen our presence in a region where habitat connectivity between the ecosystems of the Greater Yellowstone and central Idaho is a realistic goal. Please consider contributing to our efforts and thanks so much for your consideration.

For All Things Wild And Free,

Tom Skeele  
Executive Director