



PRESS RELEASE



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NOTE: More information available at www.wildlands.org/programs/safepassages

CHILDREN TO DRAW PICTURES FOR WILDLIFE

Local Students Art Contest: Raising Awareness of Wildlife-Vehicle Collisions Along Interstate 90

Gallatin and Park County students are being asked to draw pictures illustrating safe passages for both people and wildlife on Bozeman Pass. A panel of community leaders including Congressman Rehberg and Senator Baucus will select six winning designs for display in local businesses and placement on billboards along Interstate 90 between Bozeman and Livingston.

"Children's art are often opens doors to people that wonder about or question contemporary art. Among visitors to the Emerson Lobby, more people stop to look at children's art than any other art form; it may be more accessible or engaging to them," said Ellen Ornitz, the Visual Arts Director for the Emerson, which will be displaying the children's artwork April through June.

Bozeman-based American Wildlands is hosting the two month student contest as part of its highway *Safe Passages* program. The purpose of the art contest, which runs through February 20th, is to build public awareness about the ecological, economic and human safety benefits of reducing wildlife-vehicle collisions and increasing highway safe passages.

"Like most Montanans, I spend plenty of time on the road, and it is heart wrenching to see the number of animals killed by vehicles, not to mention the vehicle damage and human injury," said Superintendent of Livingston Schools, Hannibal Anderson.

A recent report by the Western Transportation Institute (WTI), based at Montana State University, showed that hitting an animal can cost the community up to \$30,000 per crash in carcass removal, vehicle repair, medical bills and emergency personnel services.

This contest is part of a larger effort to decrease the number of wildlife-vehicle collisions along Bozeman Pass. American Wildlands is focused on Bozeman Pass because the area is an important wildlife movement corridor north of Yellowstone. Wildlife must travel through Bozeman Pass to reach habitat critical for survival. Field studies supported by Montana Department of Transportation, and performed by the Craighead Environmental Research Institute and WTI, found that more than 1,200 animals were killed along Bozeman Pass during the previous five years.

"The Montana Department of Transportation is addressing this issue from many angles," said Deb Wambach, Montana Department of Transportation biologist. "Raising awareness through programs like the poster contest is an important aspect of saving lives on the highway."

"The good news is that engineers across the United States and Canada are building overpasses and underpasses which help wildlife safely cross busy highways," said Elizabeth Williamson, Safe Passages Coordinator at American Wildlands. "There are solutions."