

# STUDY INFORMATION



## Who/What

Caltrans District 5 has started a wildlife study in the Gaviota Pass region of Santa Barbara County within the state highway corridor. ICF Jones and Stokes, Incorporated is leading the study, which will analyze wildlife movement, roadkill, and habitat connectivity along 6 miles of U.S. Route 101 at Gaviota Pass. The study results will help identify potential enhancements to promote the safe passage of wildlife.

The study will analyze the spatial and temporal patterns of wildlife movements and roadkill along U.S. Route 101 through the Gaviota Pass corridor, using systematic camera monitoring and roadkill surveys, along with assessments of existing infrastructure and surrounding land use.

Caltrans District 5 hosted a virtual stakeholder kickoff meeting in December 2021 to introduce the project to local and regional stakeholders.

## Where

The wildlife study will be conducted along the U.S. Route 101 corridor at Gaviota Pass, from approximately Nojoqui Summit to Mariposa Reina.

## When

The study kicked off in early 2022. Caltrans has executed a consultant task order to perform a wildlife connectivity study within the Gaviota Pass corridor. Following coordination with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife and Caltrans, the consultant will collect seasonal data over 12 months.



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## Why

- The goal is to provide wildlife habitat connectivity assessment within the Gaviota Pass Corridor
- This is an area with observed higher roadkill occurrences that include mountain lion, black bear, and other native species, and that wildlife habitat connectivity models identify as a priority landscape linkage area.
- ICF Jones and Stokes is conducting a study utilizing systematic passage assessments, camera monitoring, and roadkill surveys, along with assessment of existing infrastructure and surrounding land use and constraints. This will provide a comprehensive and objective perspective. Field evaluations and passage assessment analyses were conducted in January/ February 2022 and camera monitoring and roadkill surveys will begin in March 2022.
- The final study report by ICF Jones and Stokes will include recommendations for approaches to enhance safe wildlife passage in the corridor and reduce the risk of wildlife -vehicle collisions.
- The approach is consistent with other wildlife habitat connectivity studies and will help to determine how animals are using the landscape and identify priority locations for wildlife habitat connectivity enhancements.
- This study is an important step to provide a comprehensive and objective perspective needed to guide management decisions in this area.

## District 5 and Wildlife Connectivity

Caltrans District 5 has experience developing and building projects on various highways across the district that enhance wildlife habitat connectivity.

These projects have been undertaken in cooperation and partnership with federal, state, and local agencies as well as universities and non-governmental organizations.

Additional wildlife habitat connectivity enhancement projects are currently underway, including a mountain lion undercrossing on State Route 17 that will begin construction in spring 2022.

