# Enhancing Wildlife Connectivity Along California's Highways: The Case of State Route 241 Wildlife Protection Fence in Orange County, California

### **Project Objectives:**



Reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions on highways through appropriate design and construction of wildlife exclusionary fence



Reduce habitat loss and fragmentation



Develop reproducible exclusionary fence design guidelines

### Methodology:

- Monitored wildlife movements and survival (2001-2013)
- Conducted a thorough literature review and analysis of mule deer helicopter surveys conducted in 2011
- Field investigations
- Collected data from GPS-collared pumas (movement patterns, right-of-way fence intrusions, successful roadway crossings, and mortalities)
- Documented mortalities for the four target species (puma, mule deer, coyote, and bobcat) as provided by the California Department of Transportation District 12 or accumulated and documented on the ground for the period 1998-2012
- Documented, photographed, characterized and mapped existing fence defects and wildlife activities
- Conducted extensive on-the-ground examination of roadway, shoulder areas, bridges, culverts and existing fencing
- Utilized right-of-way data and GIS vegetation layers to document habitat types and coverage
- Installed and monitored infrared cameras at bridge and culvert undercrossings
- Commenced monitoring to determine if:
- The exclusionary fencing reduces collisions;
- There are changes in use patterns along the roadway because of the fence; and - There are impacts on the overall welfare of the Santa Ana Mountain puma population

### Fence Design:

hain-link fence

undercrossing utilization



# The Fence is Designed to:

- Funnel animals to bridge and culvert undercrossing structures that are safe for their passage
- Minimize the amount of attraction of wildlife to areas adjacent to the roadway
- Utilize fence placement (high visibility to maintenance crews) to ensure quick detection and repair of damage to fencing, should it occur

## **Construction & Finished Sections:**



Michael Baker Acknowledgements: Civil Engineering Desig INTERNATIONA



• Exclude animals from the roadway via proper location, height and continuity

• Avoid crossing natural drainages or concrete v-ditches if at all possible, and if crossing of such structures cannot be avoided, utilize other measures to ensure that wildlife are unable to penetrate fencing at these points • Allow escape from the roadway, via jump-out ramps, if animals accidentally gain entry

Fence Staining: ATINA Construction Engineering Management: Ghirardelli

### **Project Location:**



Construction of the new fence along the ETC [Eastern Transportation Corridor] will result in an overall benefit to wildlife as it will greatly reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions and improve the effectiveness of the existing undercrossings.

United States Fish and Wildlife Service

The completed project will enhance wildlife connectivity by providing safe passage through the improved highway undercrossings. The project will ensure that the range of species protected by the NCCP/HCP will continue to thrive at sustainable levels. Mark Denny, President, Nature Reserve of Orange County

Improving undercrossings along the route will significantly improve wildlife connectivity and ecosystem sustainability, and will improve public safety by helping any conflicts between wildlife and vehicles.

Sukhee Kang, Mayor, City of Irvine

Valarie McFall Chief Environmental Planning Officer Transportation Corridor Agencies Irvine, California, USA

Doug Feremenga, PhD, AICP CEP, LEED AP Principal Environmental Analyst Transportation Corridor Agencies Irvine, California, USA



T. Winston Vickers, PhD Wildlife Veterinarian, Wildlife Health Center University of California Davis Davis, California, USA

Patrick Huber, PhD Project Scientist, Information Center for the Environment University of California Davis Davis, California, USA



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