

The Cougar Fund is a national organization that is based in Jackson WY. We are dedicated to the protection of mountain lions and other large carnivores.

We believe that our mission shares significant common ground with the National Park Service, whose legal mandate, first and foremost, requires protection and preservation of natural resources.

The Moose-Wilson corridor is a magnificent example of a resource in need of preservation and protection.

Grand Teton National Park is not only a popular destination where visitors and locals alike, can enjoy the pristine environment, but also a haven for numerous species, which depend on minimal impact to their habitat.

Recent years have seen only a gradual increase in visitation, yet infrastructure development has increased exponentially within the Park. This development can be largely attributed to two factors: 1) The need for updated and expanded visitor facilities to meet visitor needs; and 2) political pressures that represent local interests for an extensive pathway system. This uptick in development is evident in the construction of the Craig Thomas Discovery Center, the upgraded administrative building, the planned Jenny Lake Restoration Project, and also in the extensive pathway, which originates in the town of Jackson and runs all the way to Jenny Lake. The pathway is "popular" according to a 2011 Science & Resource Management report, but usage does not appear to have increased measurably over the three-year study. The results of biological assessments were inconclusive as to whether species were significantly impacted by the pathway construction through this predominantly open, sagebrush habitat. However, anecdotal evidence suggests that changes have occurred.

The Cougar Fund has grave concern about the deleterious effects of expanding the transit infrastructure within the Moose-Wilson corridor. Grizzly bears are increasing their range throughout the ecosystem and the Moose-Wilson corridor has become a predictable and indispensable destination for them when searching for food in late summer and fall. The rich vegetative food sources are especially necessary for sows as they seek to avoid competing with boars for forage.

Moose, especially those with young, regularly frequent the riparian areas alongside the existing roadway, enjoying the aquatic vegetation so vital to their diets.

Habitat loss and fragmentation are among the greatest threats to large carnivores and Grand Teton National Park is certainly **not** an appropriate place for **deliberate** and **avoidable** habitat loss and fragmentation.

Management of the Moose Wilson corridor is a prime opportunity for the National Park Service to commit to its own mandate, where the protection

of the wildlife and the habitat must be held higher than any other interest.

Please take this opportunity to resist the political pressure of a single special interest group that promotes deliberate and avoidable development. Using the authority that the National Park Service already has to preserve and protect is the right thing to do.