



The I-40 Pigeon River Gorge
Wildlife Crossing Project

SmokiesSafePassage.org

Tim Gestwicki, CEO
North Carolina Wildlife Federation
1346 Saint Julien Street
Charlotte, NC 28205

August 2, 2023

US Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

To Grant Selection Committee Members:

Seven conservation nonprofits joined together to form the Safe Passage Fund Coalition, a group dedicated to raising funds (and awareness) for the I-40 Pigeon River Gorge Wildlife Crossing Project. The member groups of the Fund Coalition are providing the non-federal match for NCDOT's \$1,800,000 Wildlife Crossing Pilot Program application, through a mix of private fundraising and in-kind donations of staff time for outreach, education, research, and monitoring.

These seven organizations are Wildlands Network, National Parks Conservation Association, North Carolina Wildlife Federation, Great Smoky Mountains Association, Defenders of Wildlife, The Conservation Fund, and The Wilderness Society.

The Fund Coalition steering committee voted to commit \$100,000 in cash as part of the non-federal matching funds for this WCPP application as well as \$195,000 in in-kind services such as continued research, monitoring, and outreach.

Looking beyond the proposed feasibility study, once a set of warranted, feasible, high-priority projects have been identified, the Safe Passage Fund Coalition plans to launch a capital campaign to raise additional non-federal funds for construction.

Thank you so much for this opportunity to make a difference for road ecology in Western North Carolina and the surrounding Smokies region.

Sincerely,

Tim Gestwicki

Tim Gestwicki, North Carolina Wildlife Federation
Safe Passage Fund Coalition Steering Committee Chair

