Letter to the Editor

Recently, while traveling on a rural road in our state, the new wire fences lining both sides peaked my interest. On one side of the road there was an old wooden post fence alongside the new metal fencing and there were man-made obstacles blocking the underpasses. As these fences went on for miles, I began to question how wildlife is to travel across our land for survival with these barriers in place. Later that week, I visited the border area and saw the miles of new border fencing being built causing even more obstacles to our wildlife.

Before human development such as fences, plows, oil, human, roads, and cattle that took their toll, New Mexico's wildlands were stunning. In the springtime wild grasses and flowers grew from the earth only to return at the end of their life cycle in the fall. New Mexico still has one of the most diverse wildlife populations in the nation, habitats to thousands of wildlife species, all playing their vital role in nature.

Habitat is the minimum area necessary for a wildlife species to naturally survive. The area in which an animal moves is its range and the size of the range depends on the animal and its requirements.

Wildlife tends to migrate between different climatic regions for food exploration for new habitat, often driven by seasons. Today, the main problem wildlife face for its survival is that both wildlife habitats and ranges are becoming smaller because of human encroachment resulting in the inability of wildlife to move between habitat areas.

Fences, the border wall, and other man-made obstacles deter many of our wildlife from meeting their basic needs for survival, thereby having a negative impact on them and on our environment.

Construction of new fences and walls is troublesome for many reasons. For the border wall, Homeland Security does not have to comply with laws involving public lands, water and wildlife, therefore they are waiving 27 laws affecting endangered species, species of greatest conservation needs, and archaeological and historic preservation sites. Fortunately, there is a

Federal Register where these waiver proposals have been published and allow for public input, which may be the only way our voices can be heard by those who are placing politics above the well-being of our planet.

Humans have caused the loss of over 80 percent of all wild animals, half of all plants, and now impact 75 percent of the earth's land surface. Without healthy environments, there are no healthy wildlife populations. Friendly places for wildlife can also be accommodating places for people and a sound argument supporting transformation to an outdoor economy. In today's world, with the overcrowding of our national parks and monuments, it only makes good sense that New Mexico would benefit from efforts to preserve biodiversity and wildlife corridors and habitat.

We must consider the impact of human expansion and its encroachment on the surrounding landscape if we are encouraging visitors to the Land of Enchantment to enjoy our wildlife and wild places. Some progress was made by our state legislature this past session by passing SB 228, the Wildlife Corridors Act, which will identify barriers to wildlife movement and develop an action plan between the Department of Game and Fish and the Department of Transportation to identify current corridors and barriers, map existing populations and needs, and seek opportunities to work with local communities and tribes to potentially reduce risks to our various wildlife species.

The bottom-line, let's restore habitat connectivity and allow our magnificent wildlife to move as nature intended, good for our environment and our economy.

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