



For Immediate Release

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## **Wildlife Crossing Project Launches to Connect the White Mountain National Forest across US Route 2 in Randolph, NH**

*Ten State and Regional Partners Collaborate to Initiate Project Decades in the Making*

**October 13, 2023**

Concord, NH – A group of transportation and conservation partners have joined together to improve motorist safety and wildlife passage along a unique stretch of US Route 2 in Randolph, NH. This stretch of US Route 2, known as Bowman Divide, is situated between the White Mountains to the south and the Randolph Community Forest and Kilkenny Unit of the White Mountain National Forest to the north. US Route 2 and associated development divides these two protected habitat areas, which are the largest and third largest conserved areas of habitat in New Hampshire, respectively. This ±1.8-mile stretch of US Route 2 in Randolph is the only location where a single public road divides the southern protected lands from the northern.

Studies completed over the last 20 years have identified the Bowman Divide area as a priority for wildlife passage because of concentrated wildlife use and high incidents of Wildlife-Vehicle Collisions (WVC). New Hampshire Audubon published one of these studies in 2007 and is leading the project in close partnership with the New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NHDOT). NHDOT owns and maintains US Route 2 and supports efforts to understand alternatives that benefit both the traveling public and wildlife.

Supported by private funding, NH Audubon hired McFarland Johnson, Inc., a civil engineering firm qualified to design a project focused on safety and wildlife connectivity. McFarland Johnson will evaluate different culvert and/or bridge structure sizes to allow wildlife to pass under the road at two different sites along US Route 2. Non-structural alternatives will also be evaluated, such as an alert system that notifies motorists when an animal is crossing the road. Additional design and engineering will commence once a preferred approach is agreed upon by project partners and stakeholders, including the Town of Randolph who owns abutting property to the crossing site locations under consideration. The development of alternatives and selection of a preferred alternative will be complete by the spring of 2024.

“We are very excited to follow up our wildlife connectivity assessment along Route 2 in Randolph with actions that will help reduce roadkill and allow wildlife to cross the highway safely” said Doug Bechtel, President at New

Hampshire Audubon. “The partnerships and local support for this work is testament to shared goals and community support. We couldn’t be more pleased to be supporting this project.”

“This project is a great example of a public-private partnership initiated to protect New Hampshire’s drivers and wildlife,” said Philip Beaulieu, District I Engineer at the New Hampshire Department of Transportation, “and will hopefully provide a road map for future wildlife crossings in the North Country.”

Additional partners participating in and supporting the project include the Town of Randolph Conservation Commission, the Town of Randolph Forest Commission, The Conservation Fund, US Forest Service, New Hampshire Fish and Game Department, Northeast Wilderness Trust, and Northeast Conservation Services, LLC.

#### *About New Hampshire Audubon*

*Founded in 1914, New Hampshire Audubon’s mission is to protect New Hampshire’s natural environment for wildlife and for people. It is an independent statewide membership organization with three nature centers throughout the state. Expert educators give programs to children, families, and adults at centers and in schools. Staff biologists and volunteers conduct bird conservation efforts such as the Peregrine Falcon restoration. New Hampshire Audubon protects thousands of acres of wildlife habitat and is a voice for sound public policy on environmental issues. For information on New Hampshire Audubon, including membership, volunteering, programs, sanctuaries, and publications, call 224-9909, or visit [www.nh Audubon.org](http://www.nh Audubon.org).*

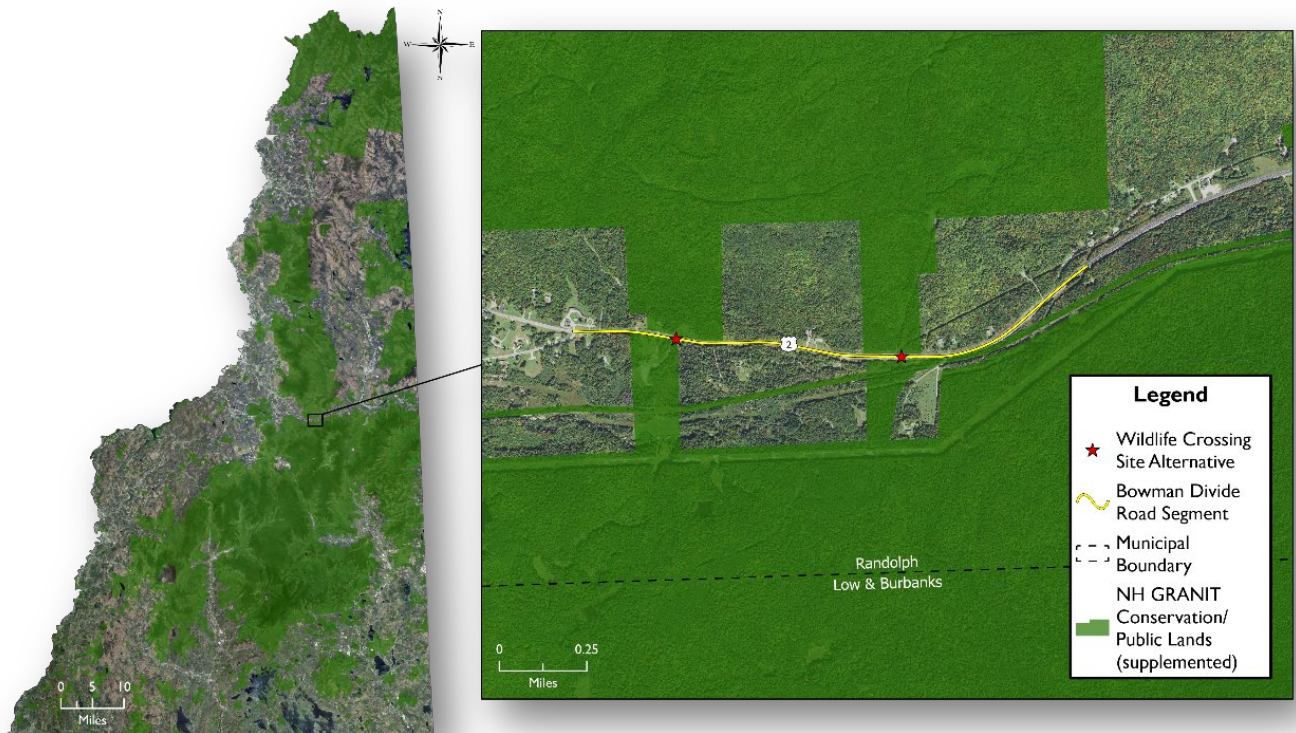
#### *About New Hampshire Department of Transportation*

*Transportation excellence in New Hampshire is fundamental to the state's sustainable economic development and land use, enhancing the environment, and preserving the unique character and quality of life. The Department will provide safe and secure mobility and travel options for all of the state's residents, visitors, and goods movement, through a transportation system and services that are well maintained, efficient, reliable, and provide seamless interstate and intrastate connectivity.*

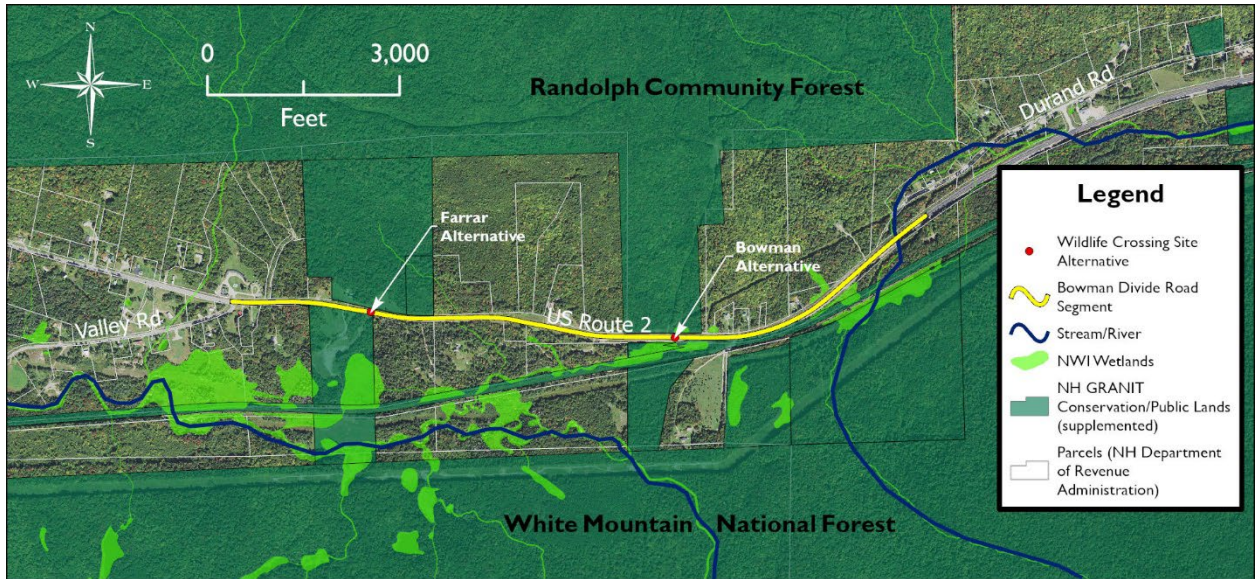
**Photo 1: Moose using an under-road passage structure. Source: P. Cramer (UDOT-USU-UDWR), available from arc-solutions.org.**



**Figure 1: Project location map showing the landscape and conservation context of Bowman Divide.**



**Figure 2: Close-up map showing the two wildlife crossing alternative sites at Bowman Divide.**



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