

Corridors and Crossings Forum

What We Heard Summary Report

Corridors and Crossing Steering Committee

We are grateful for the following Corridors and Crossings Forum Sponsors:



Executive Summary

The Corridors and Crossings Forum, held June 11–13, 2025 in Kelowna, BC, brought together more than 50 participants from First Nations, government agencies, academic institutions, NGOs, and community organizations to advance ecological connectivity and reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions (WVCs) in British Columbia's Southern Interior. The Forum emphasized relationship building, knowledge sharing, and the identification of priority actions for wildlife corridors and crossing structures.

Over three days, participants engaged in field tours, mapping exercises, presentations and facilitated workshops. Key themes included the importance of Indigenous participation, the need for improved data accessibility, and the urgency of coordinated action across jurisdictions. The Forum produced a shared understanding of regional challenges and opportunities and laid the groundwork for future collaboration.

Key Insights

- Indigenous leadership is essential: Connectivity efforts must be Indigenous-led, recognizing Nations as rights holders and braiding Indigenous knowledge with Western science.
- Evidence-based planning: Prioritization should focus on collision hotspots, species at risk, and high-value habitats, supported by stronger monitoring and integrated datasets.
- Connectivity beyond roads: Corridors must sustain multi-species movement, cultural landscapes, and ecosystem processes, not just highway crossings.
- Collaboration across boundaries: Progress requires coordination across jurisdictions, sectors, and knowledge systems.
- Stable support: Long-term funding and policy alignment are critical to move from discussion to implementation.

Priority Actions (24-Month Horizon)

- Explore the formation of a Southern Interior Connectivity Working Group to help maintain dialogue and share information across Nations, NGOs, governments, and academics.
- Encourage Indigenous-led initiatives, such as Nation-based connectivity plans (e.g., the Syilx 250-year plan), where capacity and interest align.
- Consider developing a Regional Corridor Conservation Plan that could align with Indigenous land use plans, local conservation strategies, and BC's 30×30 conservation targets.

- Pursue opportunities to collaborate with the Ministry of Transportation and Transit (MOTT), such as piloting a roadkill reporting app, identifying priority crossing sites, and integrating ecological criteria into transportation planning.
- Identify options to improve data access and integration, including shared mapping platforms and transparent systems that respect Indigenous data sovereignty.
- Look for ways to engage funders and policymakers to secure more stable financing, review policy gaps, and connect corridor work to broader provincial and federal conservation goals.

Looking Ahead

The Forum highlighted both the urgency and the opportunity for advancing ecological connectivity in BC's Southern Interior. While the actions identified are preliminary and will require further dialogue, they provide a foundation for continued collaboration. The next two years will be critical for refining priorities, engaging additional partners, and moving from discussion toward coordinated, on-the-ground initiatives.

Acknowledgements

We respectfully acknowledge the Syilx/Okanagan Nation for welcoming us to their territory. We thank our sponsors and hosts—Government of British Columbia, British Columbia Conservation Foundation, BRAES at UBC Okanagan, Parks Canada, Thompson-Nicola Conservation Collaborative, and the Okanagan Collaborative Conservation Program—for their support. Most of all, we are grateful to all Forum participants for contributing their time, knowledge, and perspectives to advance ecological connectivity in the Southern Interior.

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1. Introduction

The BC Southern Interior Wildlife Corridors and Crossings Forum was held at the University of British Columbia Okanagan on June 11-13, 2025. The objectives of the forum were threefold:

1. Encourage relationships among participants and build a shared understanding of the scope of the wildlife crossings and corridors work occurring in the southern interior.
2. Identify criteria and methods to prioritize wildlife crossings in BC's southern interior for research and conservation action.
3. Share lessons learned, highlight best practices, and identify knowledge gaps and future research needs.

The Forum was intended to be a first step in a journey between the people who are most interested in supporting regional efforts aimed at improving wildlife connectivity and reducing WVCs in the Southern Interior.

The forum was hosted by:

- The Government of British Columbia
- British Columbia Conservation Foundation (BCCF)
- Okanagan Institute for Biodiversity, Resilience, and Ecosystem Services (BRAES) at the University of British Columbia (UBCO),
- Parks Canada
- The Thompson-Nicola Conservation Collaborative (TNCC)
- The Okanagan Collaborative Conservation Program (OCCP)

The Forum provided a venue to share knowledge, identify data and policy gaps, and collaborate on strategies for enhancing ecological connectivity and reducing WVCs.

The Corridors and Crossings Forum brought together a diverse and engaged group of over 60 participants, representing a wide range of perspectives and expertise.

Attendees included:

- Indigenous rights holders from multiple Nations, including Simpcw, Skeetchestn First Nation, Ktunaxa, and West Bank First Nation.
- Academic researchers specializing in landscape ecology, wildlife biology, and connectivity modeling
- Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) focused on conservation, ecological restoration, and advocacy

- Provincial and federal government representatives involved in transportation, conservation, connectivity management, and policy
- Local government staff and planners

Participation from provincial and federal government representatives was limited by funding constraints. In particular, participation by the Ministry of Water, Land, and Resource Stewardship (WLRS), the BC government ministry leading policy development and conservation actions for ecological connectivity and ecological corridors, was very restricted.

The intent of this What We Heard Report is to provide a brief overview of conversations that occurred at the Forum, with a focus on the common themes and priority actions identified by participants. Ultimately, the objective is to support the development of an action plan to advance connectivity and crossings in BC's Southern Interior, based on:

- The detailed background paper on wildlife connectivity, corridors, and crossings in the B.C. Southern Interior provided to Forum participants (available as a separate document)
- This *What We Heard* report, reflecting the perspectives and priorities of Forum participants.
- Future discussions with parties who were unable to attend the Forum, such as provincial government policy staff and wildlife biologists.

To provide an overview of the discussions and priorities, this report is broken down into the following sections:

- The Workshop Overview section covers:
 - The discussion that occurred at the workshop, including participants' motivations for attending
 - The map produced during the mapping exercise
 - Common themes identified by the group, and priority actions
 - The next steps sub-section outlines how that conversation will continue for the next 24 months.
- The Appendices provide documents in support of this report, including the Forum agenda, background report, detailed responses to questions posed at the workshop, and a participant list.

This exercise acknowledged that no single organization holds a complete picture of regional efforts. The purpose of the mapping was to build a shared understanding and a foundation for future coordination. Participants were encouraged to share only what they were comfortable with, recognizing issues of data sensitivity, Indigenous knowledge sovereignty, and the need for future data-sharing agreements. The exercise was framed as a relationship-building opportunity, not an attempt to compile a definitive dataset.

2.4 Presentation: Integrating ecological connectivity into land-use planning

Tracy Lee, Director of Conservation Research at the Miistakis Institute, provided a presentation outlining a strategic approach to embedding ecological connectivity into municipal and provincial land-use planning, using the Municipal District of Pincher Creek (MDPC) as a case study. Tracy defined core concepts such as structural and functional connectivity and demonstrated how elk movement data were used to validate a connectivity model. The model identifies three categories of movement zones—channelized, diffuse, and impeded—and six core habitat areas, helping to guide conservation priorities.

The work is grounded in provincial frameworks such as the Alberta Land Stewardship Act and South Saskatchewan Regional Plan, and emphasizes how local governance tools (e.g., Intermunicipal Development Plans (IDPs) and Municipal Development Plans (MDPs)) can incorporate ecological networks. Lessons learned included the importance of language, inter-ministerial coordination, public engagement design, and neighbour collaboration, all pointing toward the development of a comprehensive connectivity plan to sustain landscape-scale wildlife movement.

Tracy's presentation is included in Appendix 6. This case study provided a concrete example of how ecological networks can be planned and maintained across jurisdictions and offered inspiration for similar efforts in BC.

2.5 Prioritization Approaches

On the afternoon of Day Two, participants were asked to answer the following four questions related to strategies and criteria for prioritizing future work:

1. What are the most important criteria and info needed to guide us when considering wildlife crossings in the southern interior?
2. Beyond the highway, what values from the larger landscape should a wildlife corridor protect?
3. What are the most important questions we need to answer to be successful?
4. How can we better collaborate across sectors, jurisdictions, and knowledge systems, including indigenous knowledge & western science?

Across the four questions, participants emphasized that effective wildlife corridor planning in the Southern Interior requires strong knowledge foundations, adaptive management, and enabling conditions such as funding, partnerships, and social support.

Participants emphasized that investments should focus on collision hotspots and high-traffic roads, where fencing and crossings can improve both safety and maintain connectivity. While ungulates remain a priority, participants called for greater attention to other species at risk, including amphibians, reptiles, and aquatic species, and to crossings that maintain critical habitats and corridors.

Data gaps were a recurring concern. WARS and ICBC records were described as incomplete and inconsistent, while rail mortality data were seen as severely underreported. Participants strongly supported the creation of a BC roadkill reporting app, modeled on Alberta Wildlife Watch, to standardize and strengthen monitoring. They also called for better integration of datasets across ministries, ICBC, law enforcement, and First Nations, while emphasizing the importance of upholding Indigenous data sovereignty.

Beyond roads, participants underscored that effective connectivity work depends on collaboration that spans sectors, jurisdictions, and knowledge systems. Corridors must safeguard ecological processes, First Nations law, and ecosystem health while supporting shared values rooted in Indigenous ways of knowing. Collaboration emerged as central: building trust, balancing power, and recognizing Indigenous Nations as rights holders, not stakeholders, while ensuring Indigenous knowledge and Western science inform decisions together through shared goals, open communication, and joint action on the landscape. Participants also called for mechanisms that enable coordination across boundaries. Funding and capacity were identified as critical for meaningful collaboration; without stable resources, participants noted, it is difficult to sustain engagement in multi-sector planning processes.

2.6 Priority Themes Identified

The following section presents a thematic overview drawing from group discussions. The raw notes taken from the flip charts and discussion can be found in Appendix 5. Please see the accompanying document “*Implementation of Priority Themes and Actions: A Draft for Discussion*”.

Theme 1: Collaborate across knowledge systems

Participants explored how to strengthen collaboration across jurisdictions, sectors, and knowledge systems. Recommendations included:

- Respectful engagement and accountable communication
- Equalizing power dynamics and recognizing Indigenous leadership
- Using diverse tools such as forums, mapping platforms, and shared databases
- Spending time on the land together to build trust and shared understanding

The Forum reinforced the need for ethical and effective knowledge sharing, and for creating spaces where Indigenous and Western science can inform policy together.

Theme 2: Evidence-based approach to prioritizing corridors and crossings

Key considerations included:

- Ecological value: species at risk, habitat quality, and landscape resilience
- Feasibility: cost-effectiveness, land tenure, and jurisdictional complexity
- Cultural and community values: First Nations law, human access, and local priorities
- Data availability: monitoring capacity, existing records, and modeling tools
- Governance: alignment with regional plans, legislation, and intergovernmental coordination

Participants emphasized the importance of adaptive management, iterative planning, and cross-sectoral advocacy. Tracy Lee's presentation offered a practical model that could be adapted in BC's Southern Interior.

Theme 3: Consider multi-species and multi-scale ecological function

Participants highlighted the need to protect:

- Wildlife processes: seasonal migration, breeding, dispersal, and genetic resilience
- Human values: Indigenous law, cultural landscapes, and community access
- Ecosystem integrity: habitat mosaics, floodplains, and areas at risk from development or climate change

There was broad consensus that connectivity must be understood as more than just physical linkages — it is about maintaining the flow of life across landscapes.

2.7 Next Steps

Responses to the discussion questions, above, were further developed the morning of Day 3, when participants were each asked to envision a bold idea or action that could be implemented or completed within the next 24 months. Many of these actions addressed more than one theme. Ideas were written on recipe cards and scored through an activity called [25/10 Crownsourcing](#). The raw notes are available in Appendix 5. Please also see the accompanying document "*Implementation of Priority Themes and Actions: A Draft for Discussion*".

Participants expressed a shared commitment to moving from discussion to action and identified several concrete next steps to sustain momentum. Proposed actions that could be undertaken by Forum participants, either collaboratively or as part of existing working plans, are summarized below by topic.

Strengthen Regional Collaboration

Participants proposed forming a Southern Interior Connectivity Working Group to maintain dialogue, share information, and coordinate efforts across jurisdictions. This group would include Indigenous Nations, NGOs, government agencies, academic institutions, and community organizations, and may be involved in other actions identified below. Initial working group tasks may include:

- Defining the group's scope, structure, and membership

- Develop a listserv for communicating among group members
- Coordinating mapping and data efforts via a mapping working group

Support Indigenous-Led Initiatives

Forum participants emphasized that connectivity work must involve Indigenous nations, supported through capacity-building. Next steps include:

- Ensure Indigenous Nations are engaged as rights holders and decision-makers in working groups and planning processes, not treated as stakeholders.
- Supporting the development of Indigenous connectivity plans (e.g., Syilx 250-year watershed protection plan)

Advance Corridor Planning

Participants proposed developing a regional corridor conservation plan, potentially via the new working group. This plan would:

- Identify and prioritize ecological corridors in the Southern Interior
- Align with First Nations land use plans and regional conservation strategies
- Support funding applications and policy advocacy
- Provide a framework for monitoring and adaptive management

Collaborate with MOTT on Road Crossings

Participants emphasized the need for direct collaboration with MOTT to improve wildlife crossings and reduce road mortality. Key next steps include:

- Developing a mobile app for roadkill reporting and enhancing contractor data collection (similar to Alberta Wildlife Watch).
- Identifying priority crossing locations based on collision data, habitat connectivity, and species movement
- Advocating for policy changes that require crossing structures in new highway projects and retrofits
- Integrating ecological criteria into MOTT's planning and design processes
- Supporting other monitoring and communication efforts, such as animal use counters

Improve Data Access and Integration

Participants emphasized the need for transparent, accessible, and coordinated data systems. A mapping working group was proposed to define data needs and facilitate integration across platforms. Specific steps could include

- Making corridor and crossing data available through iMap BC.

Engage Funders and Policymakers

Participants identified the need to engage funders and decision-makers to secure long-term support. Proposed actions include:

- Collaborating to secure long-term, stable funding, for example, by writing to environmental funders and federal agencies
- Conducting a legislative review to identify policy gaps and opportunities
- Linking corridor objectives to provincial conservation goals (e.g., 30x30 targets)

3. Conclusion

The Corridors and Crossings Forum marked an important step toward building a shared direction and vision for ecological connectivity across British Columbia's Southern Interior. The diversity of participants—from Indigenous rights holders and leaders to researchers, planners, and government officials—demonstrated that the momentum for coordinated, inclusive action is growing. The Forum created space for trust-building and co-learning, where First Nations perspectives, western science, and lived experience intersected. From mapping exercises and case studies to bold, long-term proposals, the discussions made clear that while challenges remain, there is no shortage of energy, insight, or commitment among the people doing this work.

We are deeply grateful to all participants who contributed their time, knowledge, and spirit to these conversations. The relationships formed and strengthened during these three days are the foundation for the work ahead. As we move into the next phase—refining actions and broadening engagement—we encourage you to remain involved, stay connected, and continue bringing your voice to this collaborative effort. This is only the beginning. We look forward to walking this path together and continuing to learn from and with one another in service of healthy, connected landscapes for all beings.

Disclaimer

This What We Heard report is a summary of discussions and perspectives shared by participants at the Corridors and Crossings Forum (June 11–13, 2025). It reflects the themes, ideas, and priorities expressed during the Forum, but it does not represent a consensus position or the official views of any single organization, government, or Nation. The report is intended to inform ongoing dialogue and collaboration in support of ecological connectivity in British Columbia's Southern Interior.

Appendix 1: Corridors and Crossings Field Tour Itinerary

Wednesday June 11th

Time	Location
12:00	Meet outside Nechako Residence
12:30	Depart Nechako Residence
12:45	Point of Interest #1: Wilden Neighbourhood. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Jen Miles, City of Kelowna ● An urban herpetology “frog” tunnel
1:15	Depart Point of Interest #1
2:00	Point of Interest #2: Trepanier Overpass, HWY 97C <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Addison Fosbery, Westbank First Nation ● History of the Trepanier crossing structures ● Wildlife history of the West Okanagan in reference to the Trepanier valley and the creation of Highway 97C
2:10	Depart Point of Interest #2
3:00	Point of Interest #3: Black Mountain, sntsk'il'ntən <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Scott Boswell, Okanagan Collaborative Conservation Program ● Addison Fosbery, Westbank First Nation ● Okanagan Mountain Corridor ● Urbanization of grassland to high value agriculture
3:45	Depart Point of Interest #3
4:00	Arrive back at Nechako Residence

Appendix 2: Corridors and Crossings Forum Agenda

Working Sessions Day 2 and 3:

Full day, Thursday June 12 and a half day, Friday June 13.

Thursday, June 12, 2025	
8:00 AM - 9:00 AM	Registration and Networking
9:00 AM - 9:30 AM	<p>1. Opening Remarks and Welcome</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome • Land Acknowledgement • Opening Prayer / Words • Setting the Stage
9:30 AM-10:15 AM	<p>2. Why are we here?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarify our motivations for attending this forum. • What do you want to achieve? <p><i>Outcome: We develop a common understanding for why we are here, and the types of conversations we want to have.</i></p>
10:15 AM – 12:00 Noon (coffee break at an appropriate time)	<p>3. Corridors and Crossings work underway in BC’s Interior</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Map and discuss the range of work that is ongoing in areas 3 and 4. <p><i>Objective: Document the range of issues, work, and people involved in the Corridors and Crossings discussion in BC’s Southern Interior.</i></p>
12:00 PM - 1:00 PM	Lunch Break (Provided Onsite)
1:00 PM - 2:15 PM	<p>4. Prioritization Criteria</p> <p><i>Objective: Provide participants with examples and ideas of how to prioritize crossings for conservation action/further research</i></p>
2:15 PM - 2:45 PM	Coffee & Tea Break and Group Photo

2:45 PM - 4:30 PM	<p>5. Prioritization Approach Breakout Session</p> <p><i>Objective: Participants work together to identify criteria/methods and data gaps for prioritizing crossings in the southern interior of BC for conservation action/further research.</i></p>
4:30 PM - 5:00 PM	<p>6. Re-cap, wrap-up and review Friday morning agenda</p>
5:30 PM - 9:00 PM	<p>Networking Dinner</p>

Friday, June 13, 2025	
8:30 AM - 9:00 AM	<p>Networking and coffee</p>
9:00 AM - 9:15 AM	<p>1. Welcome, recap of yesterday, agenda review</p> <p><i>Objective: Review the work from yesterday, set the stage for today.</i></p>
9:15 AM - 10:30 AM	<p>2. Prioritization Approach and Key actions</p> <p><i>Objective: Discuss and define the priority areas of work.</i></p>
10:30 AM – 10:45 AM	<p>Coffee and tea break</p>
10:45 AM - 11:45 AM	<p>3. Action plan and next steps</p> <p><i>Objective: Develop an action plan based on the priority areas of work.</i></p>
11:45 AM-12:15 PM	<p>4. Closing remarks, wrap-up</p>

Appendix 3: Registered Attendees Contact List

First Name	Last Name	Organization / Affiliation	Email Address
Danielle	Toperczer	Thompson-Nicola Conservation Collaborative	manager@tnccollaborative.org
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Jo-Anne	Hales	UBCO-Biodiversity Pathways	joanne.hales@ubc.ca
Theresa	Loewen	UBCO	theresa.loewen@ubc.ca
Mandy	Ross	SRG	mross@simpcwresourcesgroup.com
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Matt	Jones	MOTT	Matt.Jones@gov.bc.ca
Adam	Ford	UBC/Biodiversity Pathways	Adam.Ford@ubc.ca
Scott	Boswell	Okanagan Collaborative Conservation Program	occp123@gmail.com

Appendix 4: “Why are we here?” responses.

1	get a better understanding of the common challenges being faced by groups normally working in silos. get a better understanding of data availability, gaps, and barriers to maximizing the value/use of existing data. identify areas where statistical modelling can have an impact on existing knowledge gaps. build partnerships with decision makers to help support their decision making with science
2	to contribute to the conversation about keeping British Columbia ecologically connected. share my knowledge and learn from others. build relationships. learn about work everyone else is doing. things i care about: large connected landscapes, grizzly.
3	i hope to help educate Canadians about the threat of a US/CA border wall. it was has designed in 2018. the US border patrol has been marketing (social media) the narrative that drug smuggling and human smuggling is at dangerous levels.
4	i am a UBCO prof of ecology with expertise in landscape ecology. i want to safeguard ecosystems of southern BC which includes fauna. general top 5 list for priority is where, why, who / rightholders, communication strategy, research needs.
5	core desire to support the wildlife + their habitat from not only persisting but being resilient for now and future generations. transportation corridors are identified as a significant threat. no one can do this alone. how can we continue to support eachother moving forward through data sharing, advocacy, policy change, funders, research, knowledge sharing of local wildlife hotspots. prioritization, but also opportunistic (low hanging/quick wins). proactive planning. delivery and action
6	learn from others, see where everyone is at and see why they are here. nice to try and contribute with my experience to help this movement move forward. hear other perspectives, learn from their experiences.
7	to meet our neighbours and other stakeholders + rights holders in the area. to hear other perspectives and share mine. to learn about priority objectives and potential opportunities to act together
8	to better understand priority areas for future implementation of wildlife mitigation - with those i've met at the forum
9	to understand priority areas + opportunities for future research + knowledge gaps to inform research. to participate with others in identifying challenges + opportunities in connectivity science + planning. to hear a diversity of perspectives
10	to strengthen relationships towards corridors work. MOTT - pre-planning + low-hanging fruit projects. action plan to move past issues. nation rights being impeded; rights holders not stakeholders. as rights holders -> resistance to this eg. AB & bison; fixing post hoc. emmanue -> how going to do solution, how do we build up together. communications.
11	address the migratory needs of non-generalist species (e.g. mule deer, sheep). work towards this.

12	build connections. reduce wildlife death on roads. learn about what's happening in BC. identify solutions for data gaps. continued learning
13	come together to work on connectivity solutions at a landscape level. elevate Syilx nation concerns. collaborate/pool resources and knowledge to get more done. achieve some tangible next steps. what next? where? \$? time lines? key areas. land use planning.
14	connect with people. be part of discussion about how we can work together on connectivity. better understand the overall situation. better understand how to move ahead.
15	to support and uplift Syilx values from a WFN perspective and specifically: ecological connectivity of our kin to support ecosystem function and health. create connections and relationships with other organizations and jurisdictions to support the above goal.
16	to learn. strengthen our understanding of the importance of corridors and how to ensure they remain intact in the onslaught of human activity. to advocate more effectively. to take the learning and science and use it to compel government to take action and invest in these critical corridors. wildsight.
17	to learn from others + other regions - networks. local successes, challenges and methods. learn more about braiding knowledge. gain insights to take back to Simpcwúl'ecw. knowledge about next steps for us and how landscape ecology as a whole fits in to this. what resources and data do we need to gather?
18	learn about up-to-date information, what works, what doesn't around corridors. incorporate that info into regional (Thompson Okanagan Region) planning and actions to support habitat conservation / 30x30 at regional scale. connect with partners, colleagues, experts on this work. incorporate into N-S corridor on west side of lake
19	to learn, to listen, to understand. to offer my knowledge, as little as there may be, to the community and the collective working toward tackling this issue. learn as much as i can, form lasting relationships and partnerships, and allow the wisdom and knowledge of those around me to help me shape into the researcher this province needs. i'm a student, very early in my career.
20	want to identify gaps in knowledge related to efficacy in crossing structures to facilitate wildlife movement / ecological connectivity (ie overpasses, underpasses, frequency on landscape, species requirements). prioritizing funding. understanding local priorities of southern interior as someone new to the region
21	to support research on connectivity and facilitate the uptake of science in decision making. cohesion and motivation to plan the next meeting. to learn about indigenous perspectives on connectivity.
22	learn more about connectivity work in south eastern. meet new people doing connectivity work. learn how others are approaching the operationalization of connectivity into actions.
23	want to understand how the BCWF can work with all the partners to leverage our 40,000 membership to assist with corridor and crossing projects. determine the next steps needed to support any initiatives brought forward.

24	learn more about landscapes outside of my/our connectivity work/focal areas. better understanding of connectivity science and how corridors are defined/implemented across regions. relationship building, learning from others. best practices and consistency for prioritizing crossing projects. how to advance consistent funding.
25	badger connectivity restoration and road mortality reduction, number one threat to endangered badgers. here to participate and learn.
26	support the continuation of life in this region. the formation of a network of organizations and government agencies to move connectivity work forward.
27	to learn about opportunities to advance habitat connectivity, and safe passage wildlife crossing structures in the Okanagan region and beyond. identify and connect with key partners. expand collaborations. identify priority areas for protecting and restoring habitat connectivity and safe passage crossing structures (multi-taxa).
28	increase wildlife protection. increase habitat protection. find ways to live with the land. enhanced collaboration to make improvements at the local level. ways to enhance thoughtful development across the Okanagan that respects the natural environment. momentum to prioritize connectivity
29	learn about corridor projects in the southern interior. discuss criteria & applications to diverse ecosystems and landscape contexts. learn more about the province's support for corridors in relation to land use planning processes. keeping landscapes connected before its too late. get ideas for our corridor planning work in the East Kootenay in multi-jurisdictional landscapes. ways to prioritize areas for corridors & connectivity & multiple scales- landscape -> crossings at highways
30	to understand more how to model connectivity, how to assess connectivity for the purposes of prioritizing land purchases and protection in ways that will best meet 30 x 30 goals. to understand more what kinds of data are available for assessing connectivity, and to understand what has been done and develop relationships with others who are working towards the same goals. achieve connections and data.
31	get to know people working in this field. info gathering - learn about advances in connectivity research and implementation. better understanding of needs and gaps ~ how BCPF can support/facilitate. better understanding for how to assess and track connectivity on broad regional to provincial level, to inform BCPF more on assessing conservation values and identifying priorities.
32	provide on the ground perspective of human impact management (local government regulation). gain connections with those researching impacts + developing solutions so those BMPs can be integrated into development, avoidance, mitigation, + compensation restoration regulations
33	professional interests working in south Okanagan on large-scale conservation, ecological connectivity is a naturally an important part of this. personal = intense interest and experience in contributing to road ecology studies + implementation. want to make connections, find efficiencies & create a plan to develop shelf ready solutions for ecological connectivity and road ecology in the Okanagan

34	ideas & input on how to advance crossings id + prior in the T-N. collaborations on corridor design and id within the T-N. connections and collaborations on corridor + crossings in T-N that are achievable, inclusive & based on best available western science and indigenous knowledge.
35	networking. learn from other. learn about crossings and connectivity project happening in south eastern BC. better working relationships
36	connectivity is essential to understand how to manage the landscape to the benefit of all creatures within. Simpcw would like to meet and engage with the leaders in this discipline and other nations to learn how we can apply principles and BMP's to Simpcwúl'ecw.
37	learn more about initiatives in the region. build relationships with people doing this type of work. share information + learnings from the kootenays. identify potential partnerships or collaborations to support corridors and crossings in the kootenays. priority actions. first nations rights holders, stewards, academics, government, land trust, citizen scientists, stewardship groups ~ duplication of effort, greater collective impact + stronger outcomes
38	build forestry practices around Ktunaxa values on the land. Ktunaxa values, exercising my rights, preserve, protect, enhance. get support, recommendations, supporting data for corridor models in development.
39	connect with like-minded folks. prioritize infrastructure decisions and data to make those decisions (up-to-date, accessible data) within the region
40	to get a better understanding of how to prevent animal mortality from vehicles, as this impacts main food source. better idea of whats been happening, learn what and maybe come up with ideas that we can work with.
41	to share Skeetchestn's experience with identifying and pressuring action to mitigate road and rail-road mortality and the impediment they provide to connectivity. also identify the challenges that we face in getting any action to address these issues and ideally to achieve some means for overcoming the challenge (e.g. CN/CP/MOTH) and mitigating the issue.
42	meet people more fulsomely that i've worked with and meet new people. learn more about concerns and priorities from people who know their local/traditional areas. contextualize past lessons and knowledge. identify new connectivity opportunities. knowledge gaps.
43	i am here to learn more on wildlife restoration. would like to know how different organizations can support the restoration process during various types of developments and land use opportunities planning. why organizations don't talk to eachother - why there is a gap?
44	i have been given the "connectivity file" in my role at ONA. hoping to make connections with people. background in process-based ecological restoration - want to understand relationship between this discipline & ecological connectivity planning. not much background in wildlife - i have lots to learn.
45	i work on establishing and maintaining connectivity of large mammal populations and am interested in learning about the overlaps with other projects in space and time. i would like to learn as much as I can. make connections so that my work can support the initiatives that are already happening, i also want to see where there are opportunities for collaborations.

Appendix 5: Prioritization Approach and Key Actions Identified Raw Notes

Other

- *Achieve 30 x 30 goals*
 - *Achieve 30 x 30 ~ Government priority*
 - *Independent audit for BC 30 x 30 goals*
 - *30 x 30 Conservation strategic plan, habitat conservation in TOR (thompson Okanagan Region) = + 115,00ha of new conservation land by 2030*

Foundational

- Local community engagement
 - *Local community engagement*
 - *(more art than science) ~ Visual representation of road mortality. For example a mound of artificial animals (or A. I. generated images) that reflects the biomass lost to roads in Southern Interior every year (or day or minute). Images of settlers standing on mounds of buffalo are so iconic that they are known to everyone. There public needs to really see and feel the cost of roads*
- Biosecurity CWD ~ Hay as a disease vector
 - Wayne
- *All connectivity work in BC must be Indigenous-led*
 - Meaningful increase capacity, efforts must follow indigenous law
- **Trepanier Overpass animal use counter**
 - **Matt Jones**
- *BMP = Develop industry protocols and guidelines that incorporate fish and wildlife*
- 'The right of way' as a resource

6 Months

- Data accessibility and transparency
 - *Data accessibility*
- Jason's Data thing & connectivity metadata
 - Jason, Danielle
 - Southern Interior Connectivity listserv
 - Mellissa, betatest based on the contact list
- Who is working on connectivity - ie committees/groups? Send out a communication
- Bring funders into conversation
 - **Write a letter to the Environmental funders group** (they meet once a year, write letter/proposal to them about the importance of connectivity and send one or two reps from group to talk to them)
 - Scott, Danielle
 - James to talk to Parks Canada (if their funding continues past March 2026) about the forum and the concerns regarding better access to funding (sub-distributions)

through HCTF (more hoops to jump through), spending half of the grants just writing the proposal, etc).

- Also have conversation with federal funders about better access to long-term stable funding
- Parks Canada Ecological Connectivity Fund
- First Nations priority needs
- BCPF: Funding for I.P.C.A
 - Griffy

12 Months

- *Creation of an app for highway maintenance contractor data collection – like Alberta Wildlife Watch*
 - *A phone App for reporting roadkill (for Contractors and Communities)*
 - *Use Lynn Campbell's "Biodiversity Forum for local governments" to access data on where crossing structures are. She is developing a map that anyone can populate with biodiversity enhancement projects. NGOs are posting South Okanagan restoration projects, for example. These restoration sites could be linked to corridor enhancement. This map could be mined for data by researchers & linked to iMapBC. TLDR: leverage existing maps/datahubs & create process to mine + add to iMapBC.*
 - *Do it.*
 - *Take the initiative on your own while also collaborating with others.*
 - *Just Do It!! If you have a project move it forward. People will catch up and get on board later.*
 - Alberta Data transfer (300,000\$) that has been denied twice internally
 - Link our objectives to objective of BC Gov for habitat connectivity
 - Barrier is \$ cost to get GoA app
 - Randal
 - Link to T4W
 - **Need letters of support**
 - **Jadzia, Adam, Melissa, and Matt (lead) to organize to send out requests for letters of support**
 - **TNCC and Scott Bowsell to help too**
- **Work with Environmental Law Foundation to get legislative review and gap analysis**
 - Scott
 - *1. Move grizzly bears back into the North Cascades. 2. Push to make highways + linear infrastructure have mandatory crossing components*dependent on species & geography at that spot.*
 - *Get MOTT to commit in a meaningful way and fund*
 - *Implement a provincial requirement to construct wildlife crossings retroactively (for wildlife connectivity values) and proactively (for new highway projects)*
- *Animal use counter on the Trepanier Overpass. Education! ♡*

- *Legislation/policy for any new roads require crossing structures of some sort, dependent species/geography. Similar to “No Net Loss”.*
- Data sharing at different levels of government
- Mapping Working Group
 - Discuss: Maps/data required & communication ~ Vanessa to organize first meeting.
- Keep an eye on the outcome of ONA 250 year plan
 - Scott + Mackenzie

18 Months

- Railways - Need to think about this
 - Shawn, Meghan, Wayne, Robin
- *Focus on reconnecting a mosaic ecosystem types and processes (process domains) rather than just animal movement (eg. floodplains, fire areas, etc)*
- *Pushing for connectivity priorities in Conservation Lands management & expansion ~ linked to 30 x 30*
- **Compile a Corridors working group “draft” plan. Multiple plans (a plan for different regions)**
 - There's a planning piece, and then there's continuing the group
 - Proposal: what this group would look like and what it would do, and that we would share that for some discussion with Kootenay connect, OCCP, TNCC
 - James, Todd, Danielle, Scott, Marcy, Jadzia, outreach to Northern districts, Juliet
 - September?
 - First meeting agenda: who needs to be at the table who isn't already? Next step- Developing a corridor conservation plan for the region.
 - *Form a Southern Interior Connectivity Working Group with Nations, NGOs, Governments, academics, etc, to keep conversation + information sharing moving forward*
 - *Mapping Working Group to establish and execute mapping needs. (could be several depending on need ~Vanessa).*
 - *Comprehensive Corridor & Crossing planning for the Southern Interior*
 - *Form an informal (to start) working group of individuals/orgs/first nations within this room (and beyond) to advance connectivity & crossings work in the Southern Interior*
 - *Remove siloing: stop taking scattershot approach & narrow down/focus (don't need 1 million groups). Figure out what the government/public needs to be sold the idea of connectivity. Need the right people at the table, not just all biologists/environmentalists. Identify what has the most teeth to push this forward (eg. FN title & rights, accurate data, etc)*
 - *My research at UBCO for my PHD - looking into connecting grasslands from the South Okanagan to the Thompson Nicola while integrating climate change projection for BEC Zones to consider future Connectivity opportunities + develop a Corridor that will be robust enough for the future*

- *A Southern interior connectivity listserv to offer an easy (not annoying) way to stay connected*
- *Corridor conservation plan for region*
- *Develop the first ecological corridor plan & receive provincial recognition for the corridors*
- Respect animal movement ~ don't get too caught up in human boundaries
- Transparency
- Accessibility is key
 - Essential to connect to knowledge hub so that everyone knows where to get information
 - Info sharing

24 Months (Start now but might take much longer)

- **Primary idea is to create a workshop to discuss (Scott and Danielle to take responsibility of organizing, along with Simpcw and Akisqnuq First Nations):**
 - *Acknowledge neighbouring First Nations land claims to further each others sovereignty*
 - *Establish common ground in areas of dispute*
 - *As an alliance demand recognition of Title by feds similar to Haida*
 - *Move consultations to higher levels of consultation reject OGMA redeployment until then*
 - *Propose Nation based coalitions on ecological connectivity*
 - *IPCA*
 - *Title & rights case*
 - *As per Matt's mention of knowledge hub centers. Accessibility is key if we are to engage the Nations to continue their good work*
 - *Indigenous - led 150 year connectivity plan*
 - *Create partnership between all First Nations, conservation + recreational use groups to legally battle against development projects detrimental to corridors.*
 - *Use that same team to leverage government to create world leading strategies for corridor and crossing development*
- Also ties in with the Sylix land use plan anticipated in the next 12 months and their 250 year plan
- This also fits within the workshop (part of its agenda):
 - *As a first nations member, push for my nation to create environment/species at risk bylaws, protected areas, and/or corridors and crossings on-reserve lands*
 - Part of workshop agenda
 - Jen; local gov
- *Fence Highway 3 from Alberta to Osoyoos (and/or the railway). Re: CWD, sheep conflict, then build/find crossings*

Appendix 6: Tracy Lee Presentation

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APPLIED CONSERVATION RESEARCH

Integration of ecological connectivity into municipal and provincial planning

BC Southern Interior Wildlife Crossings and Corridors Forum

June 12rd 2025





Municipal District of Pincher Creek Ecological Network

- Create an ecological network for terrestrial large mammals
- Develop strategies to maintain the Ecological Network into provincial and municipal planning and policy



Terminology

Ecological Connectivity:

Ecological connectivity is the unimpeded movement of species and the flow of natural processes that sustain life on Earth.

Ecological Network:

- **Core:** “intact” areas that support habitat for terrestrial large mammals.
- **Corridor:** A clearly defined geographical space where governance, management and stewardship over the long term maintain or restore effective ecological connectivity (Hilty et al. 2020)

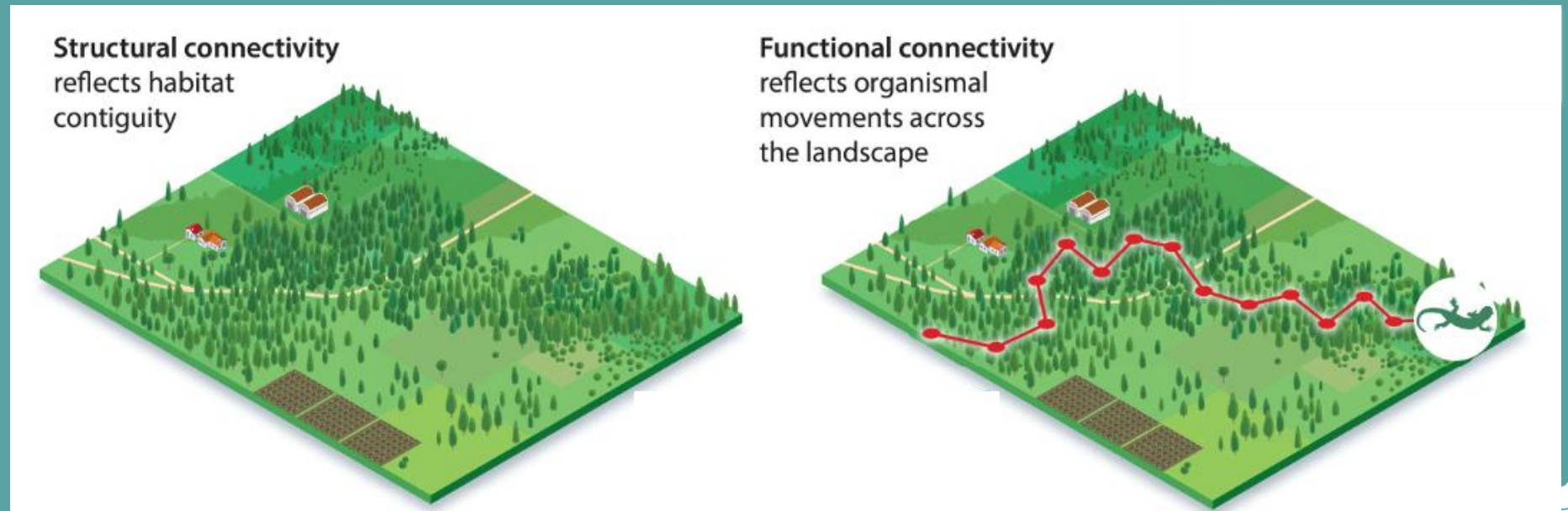
Crossings: maintain or restoration movement across a highway



Terminology

Structural connectivity – species-agnostic, based on naturalness remaining on the landscape

Functional connectivity – species response to features on the landscape and considers home-range, dispersal, migratory movements

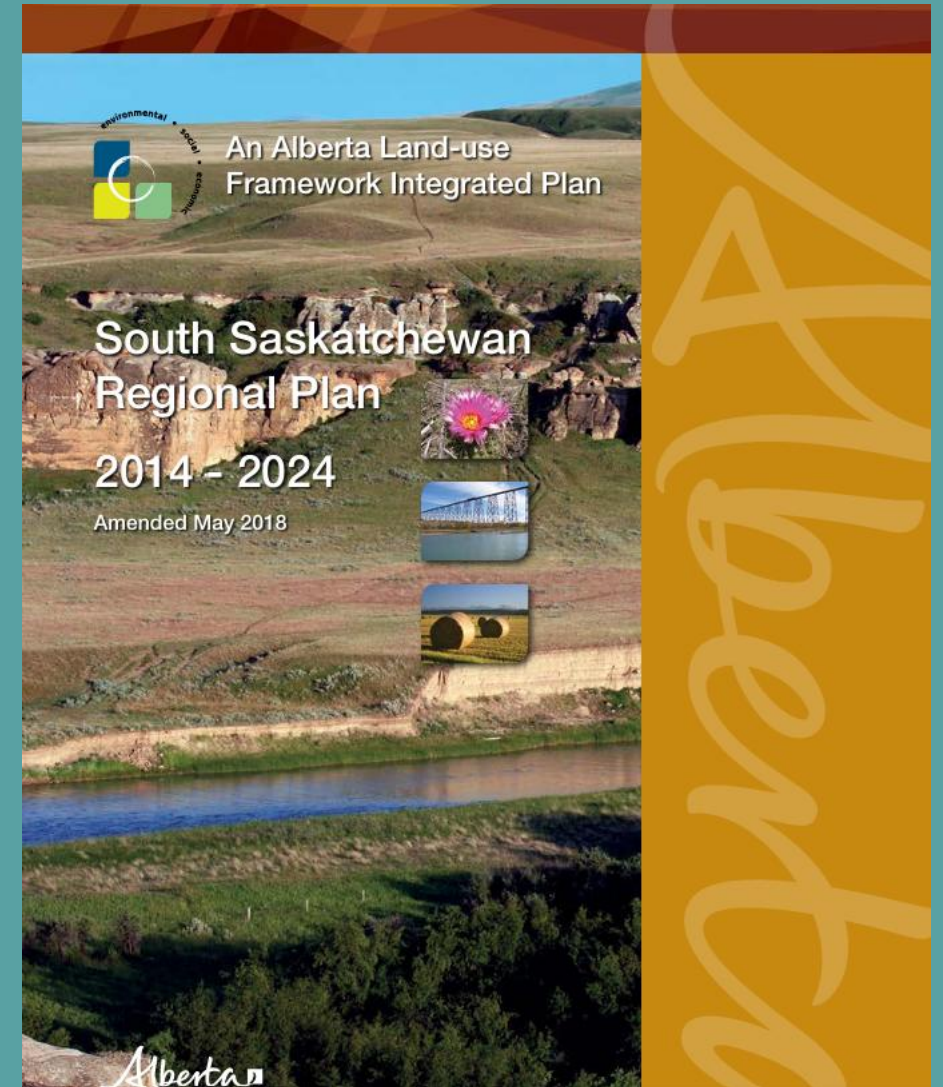


Supportive Provincial Policy

Alberta Land Stewardship Act (ALSA) is the legal authority to implement the province's Land Use Framework and directs the preparation of regional plans. ALSA provides direction and leadership by identifying objectives of the Government regarding land use, economics and the environment.

South Saskatchewan Regional Plan

(SSRP) speaks broadly to “connectivity of wildlife habitat” (p 57) which provides opportunity for municipalities to integrate policies around connectivity into their planning documents.



South Saskatchewan Biodiversity Values

- Areas of High Biodiversity
- New Conservation Areas
- Private Land Conservation
- Intact Native Grasslands
- ↔ Corridors
- ↔ Connectivity Across Transportation Corridors
- ↔ Key Areas to Ensure Connectivity

- City, Town
- First Nations Reserve
- Military Reserve
- Provincial Park or Protected Area
- National Park
- Green Area
- White Area
- South Saskatchewan Region
- Provincial Highway

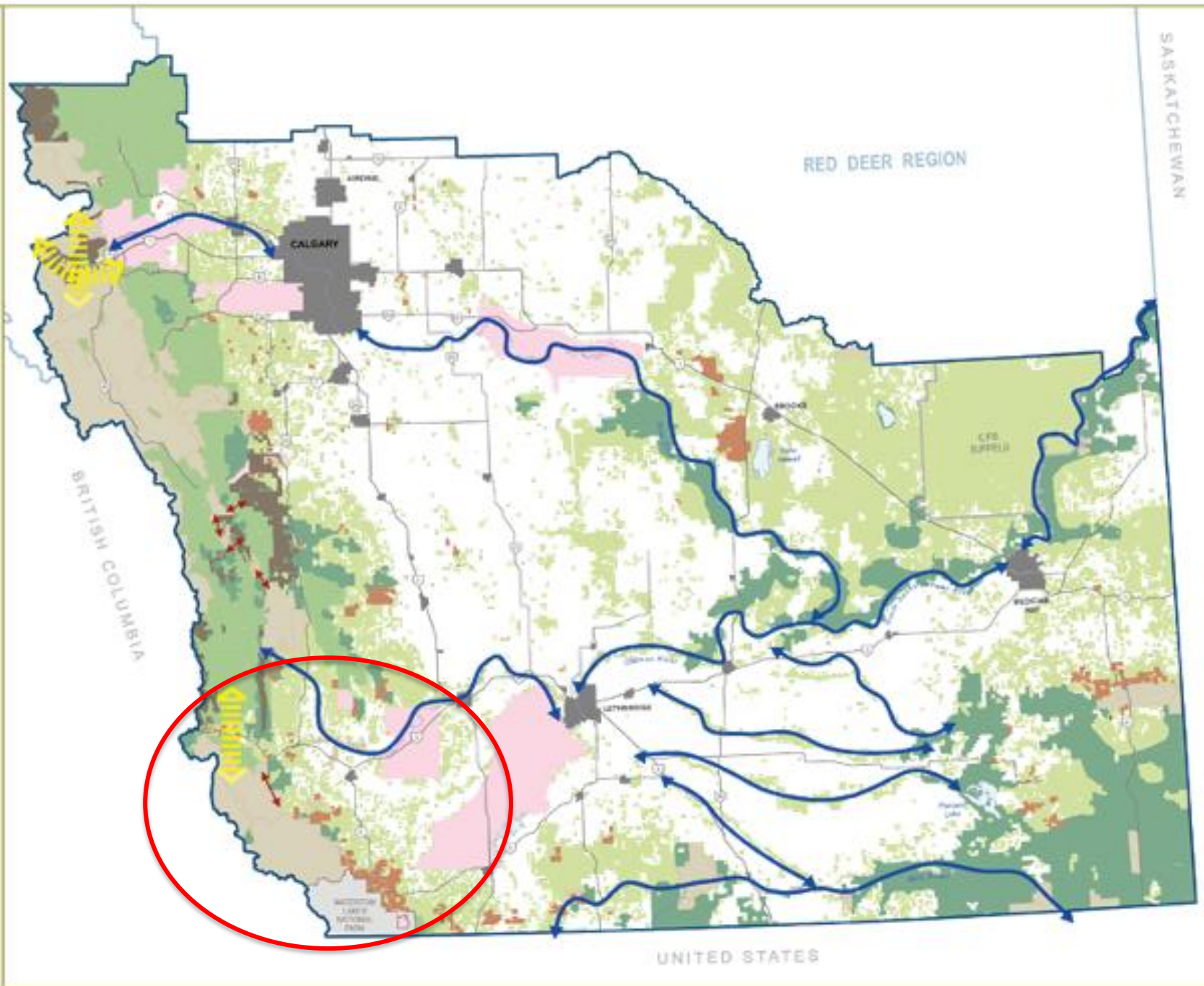


Alberta Government

Published: February, 2018

Information as depicted is subject to change, therefore the Government of Alberta assumes no responsibility for discrepancies at time of use.

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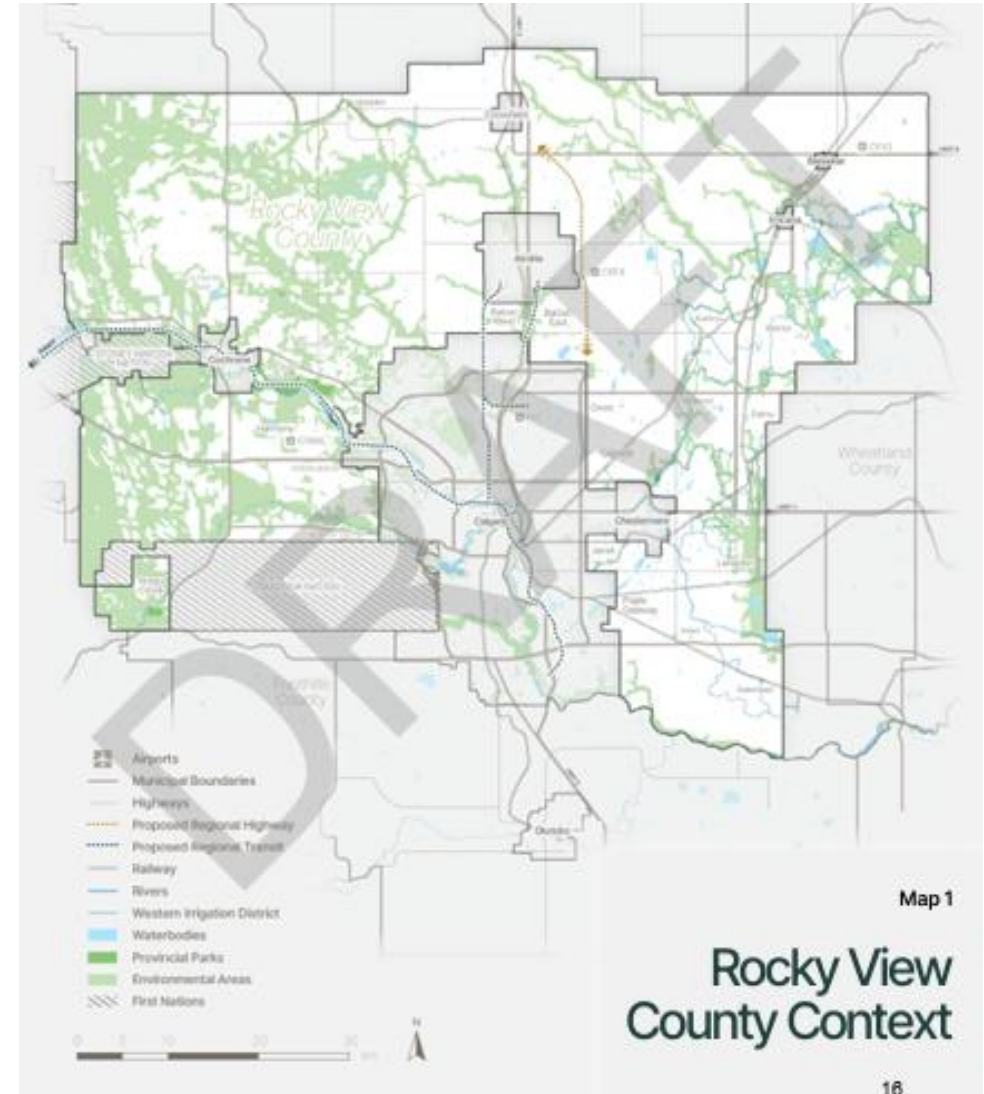
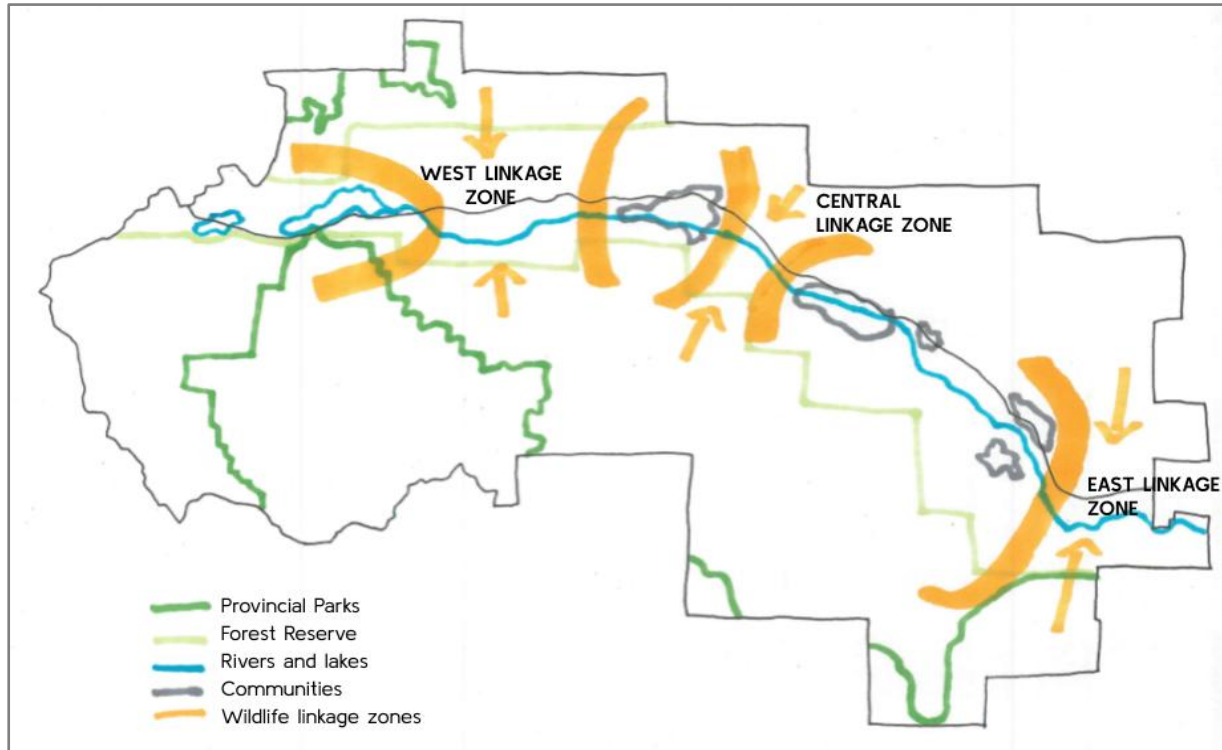
County level governance

Local decision-makers can take direction from the provincial legislation to create policy regarding connectivity and integrate the concept into their:

- Intermunicipal development plans (IDPs)
- Municipal Development plans (MDP)
- Area Structure Plans (ASP), and
- Land Use Bylaws (LUB).



Municipal Development Plan

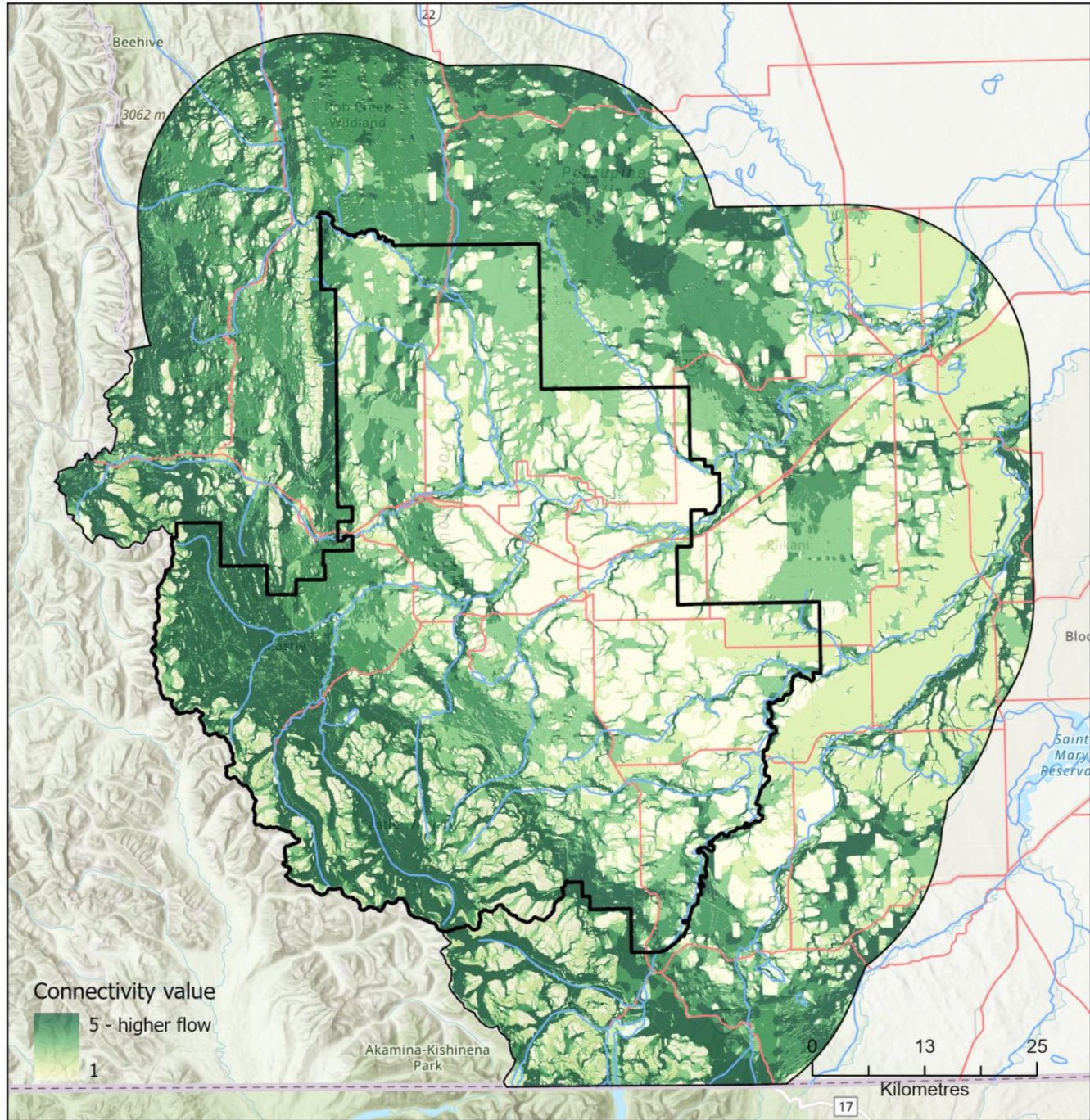


MDPC Ecological Network Framework

1. Structural connectivity model (Marrec et al. 2020. Science)
2. Validate with elk, grizzly bear, black bear, moose and badger
3. Categorize connectivity into categories
4. Core Areas based on intactness from structural connectivity model
5. Alignment between AVC clusters and potential movement areas
6. Strategy development – based on connectivity categories management type (crown, private and municipal) and land use district (zones).
7. Connectivity plan.....



STRUCTURAL CONNECTIVITY MODEL



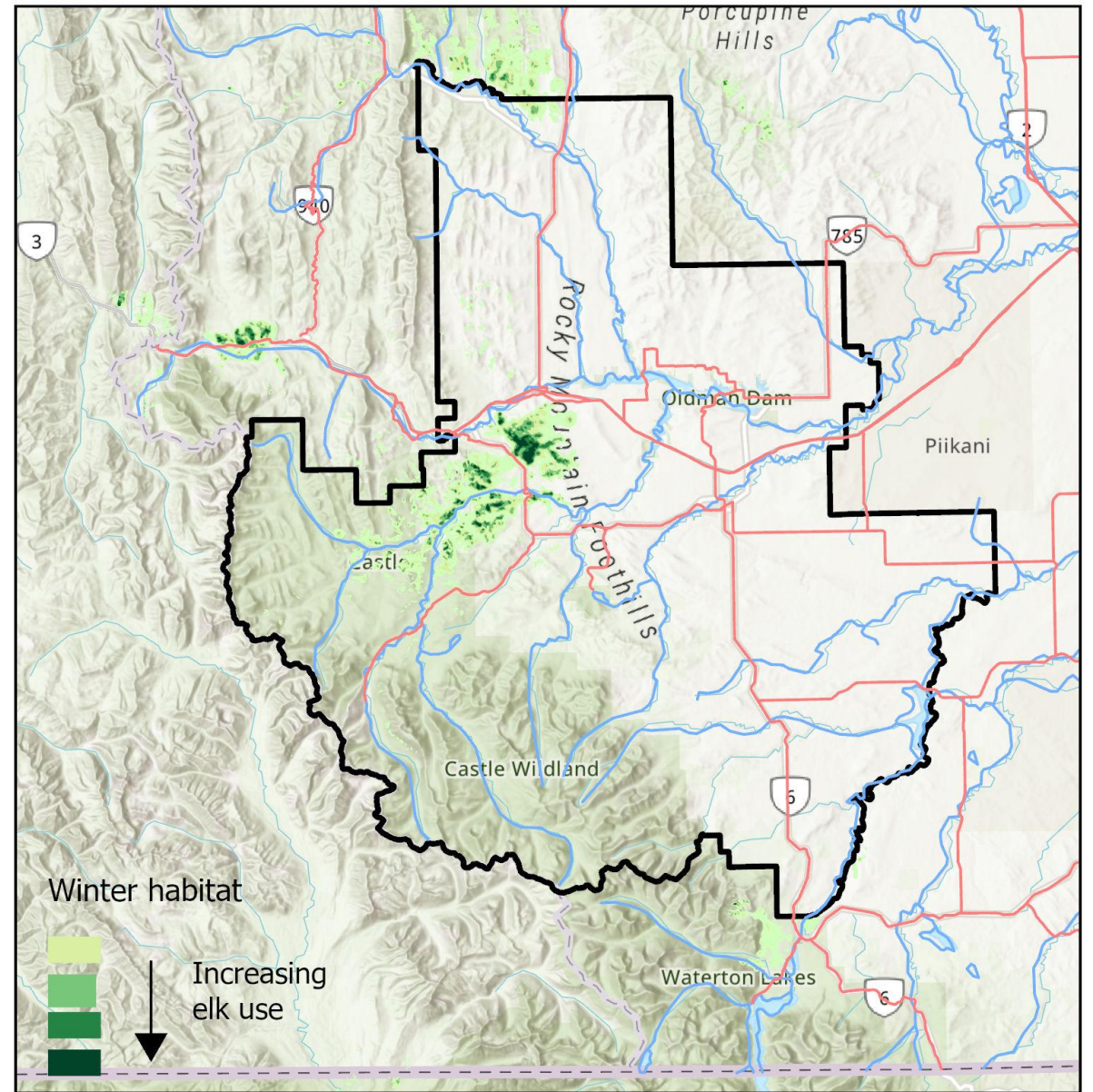
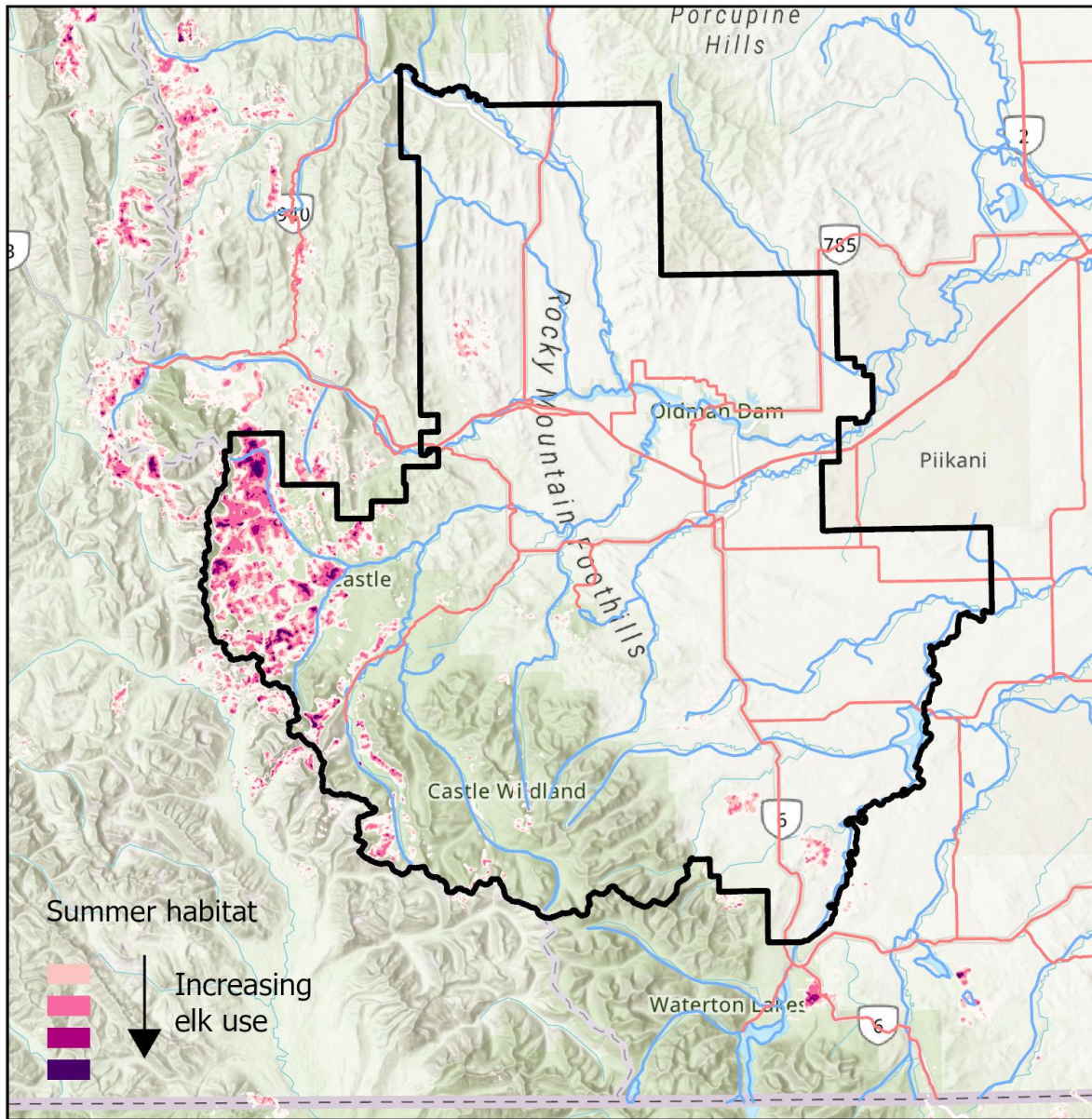
Assumption - habitat structure will support terrestrial mammal movement.

Does structural connectivity represent mammal movement?

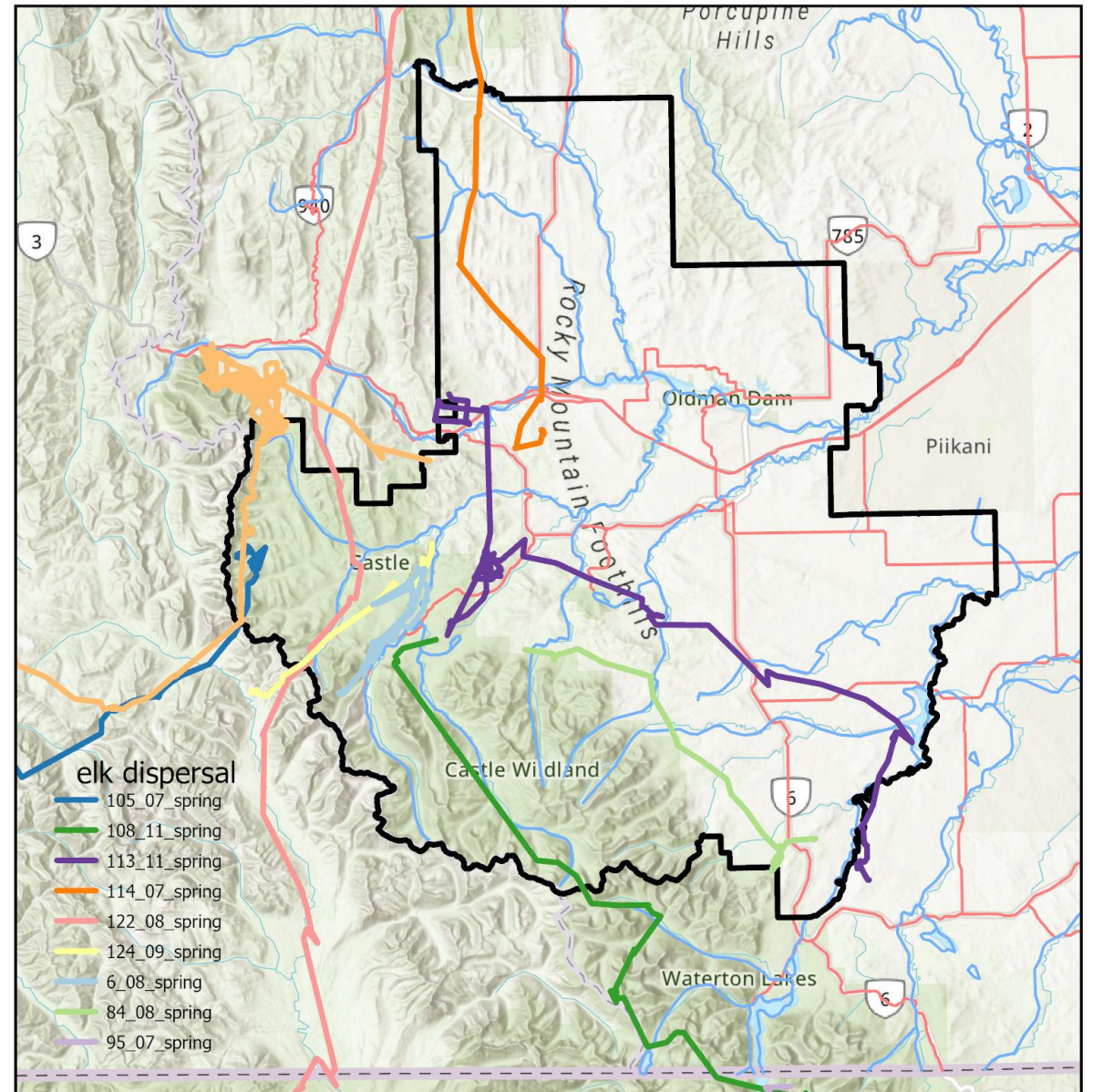
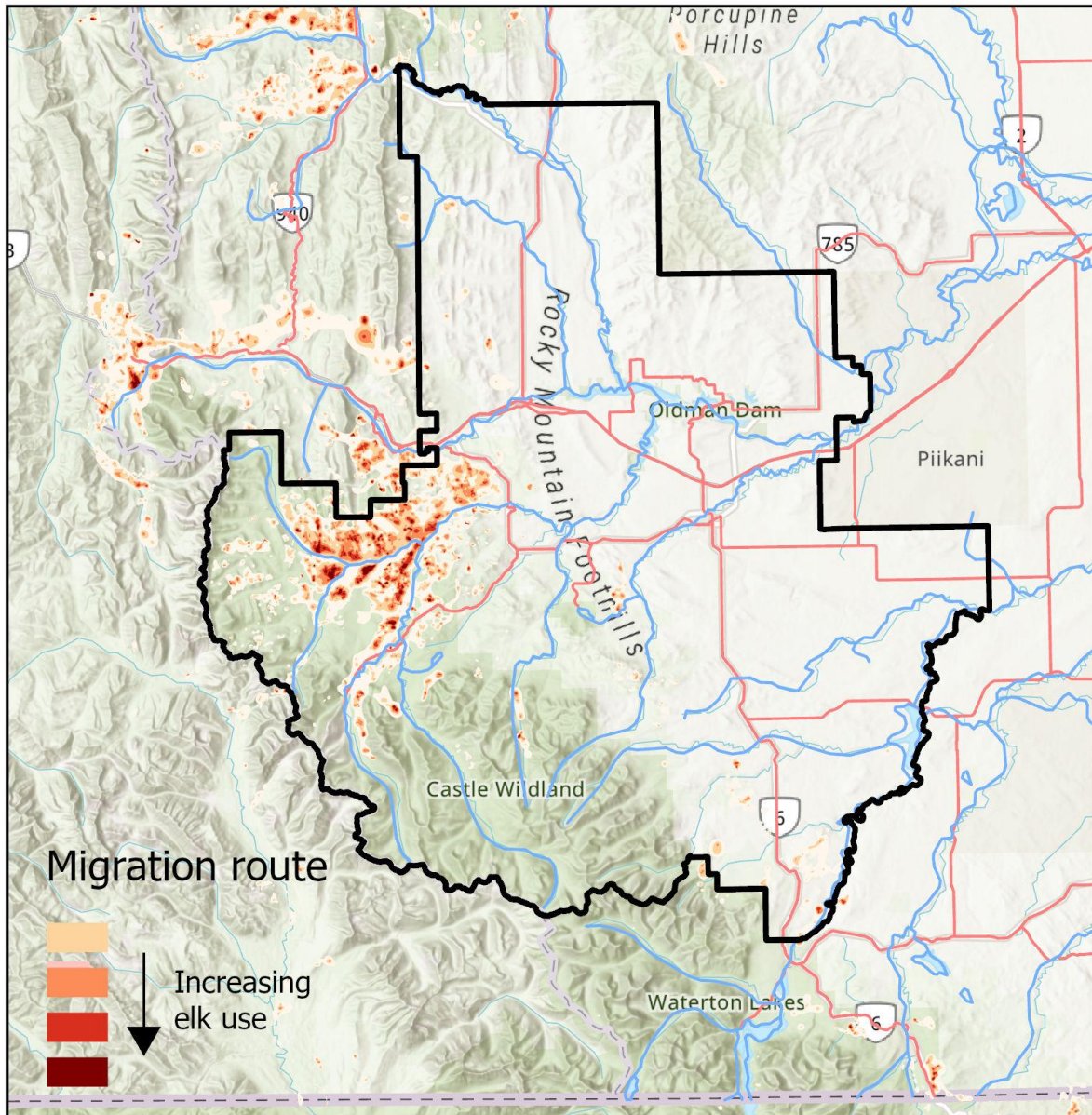
- Elk collar data from Rocky Mountain Elk Project
- Six movement types:
 - Summer
 - Winter
 - Spring migration
 - Fall migration
 - Dispersal
 - Resident
- Migration mapper (University of Wyoming)
- Glmm to compare movement type to five connectivity bins



ELK WINTER AND SUMMER RANGE

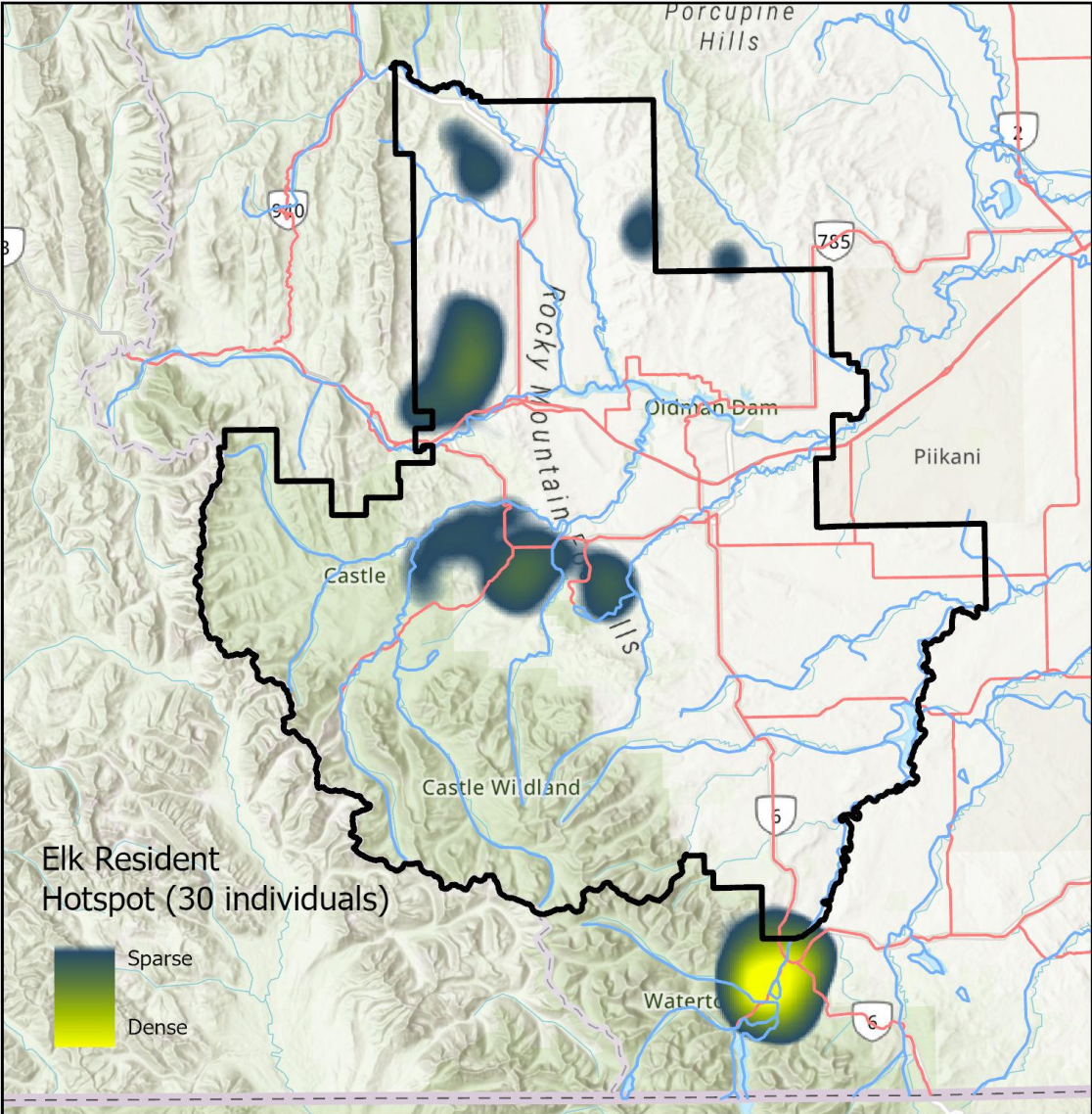


ELK MIGRATION AND DISPERSAL



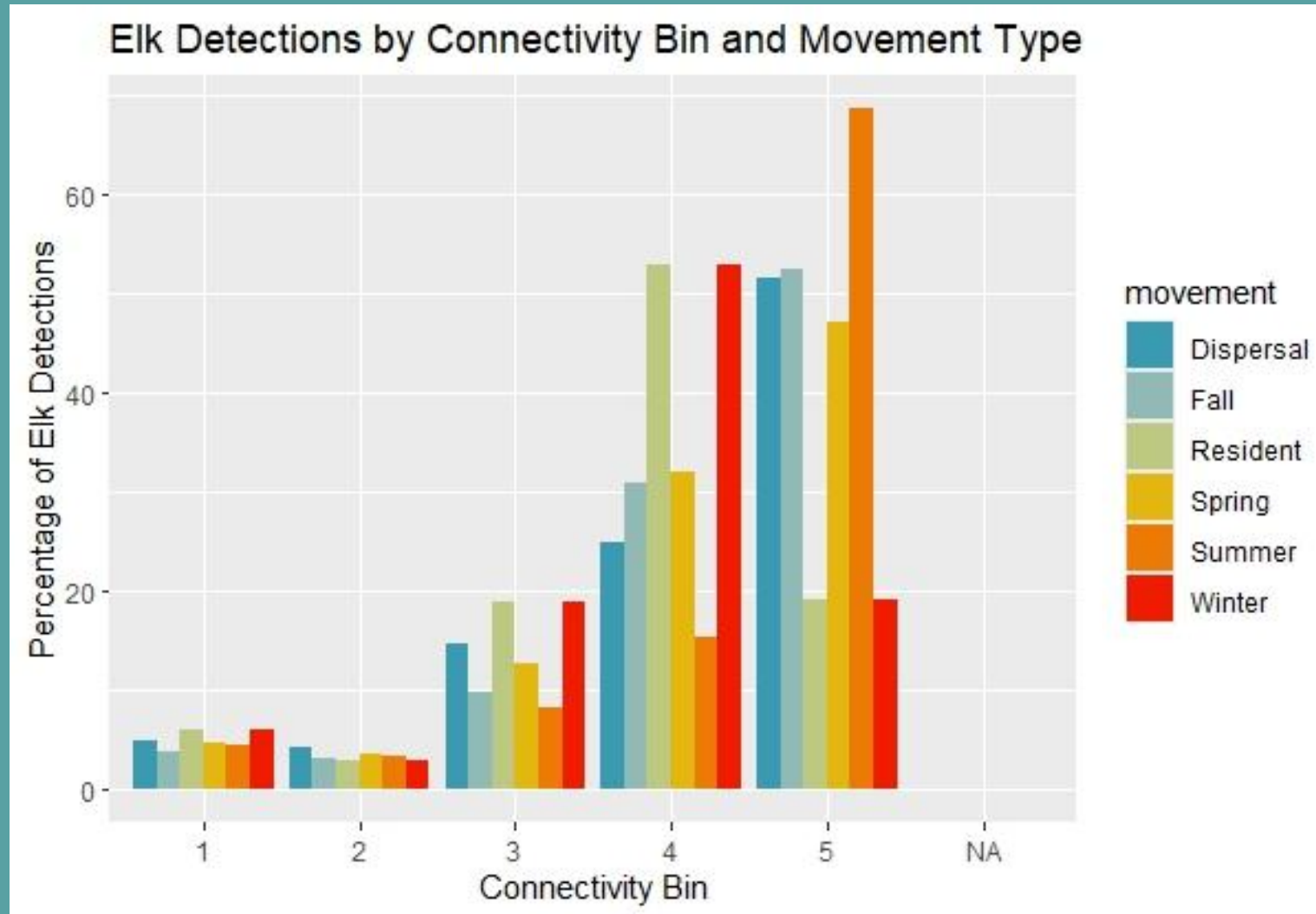
0 5 10 20 Kilometres

ELK RESIDENT ANIMALS



0 5 10 20 Kilometres

Elk and Structural Connectivity

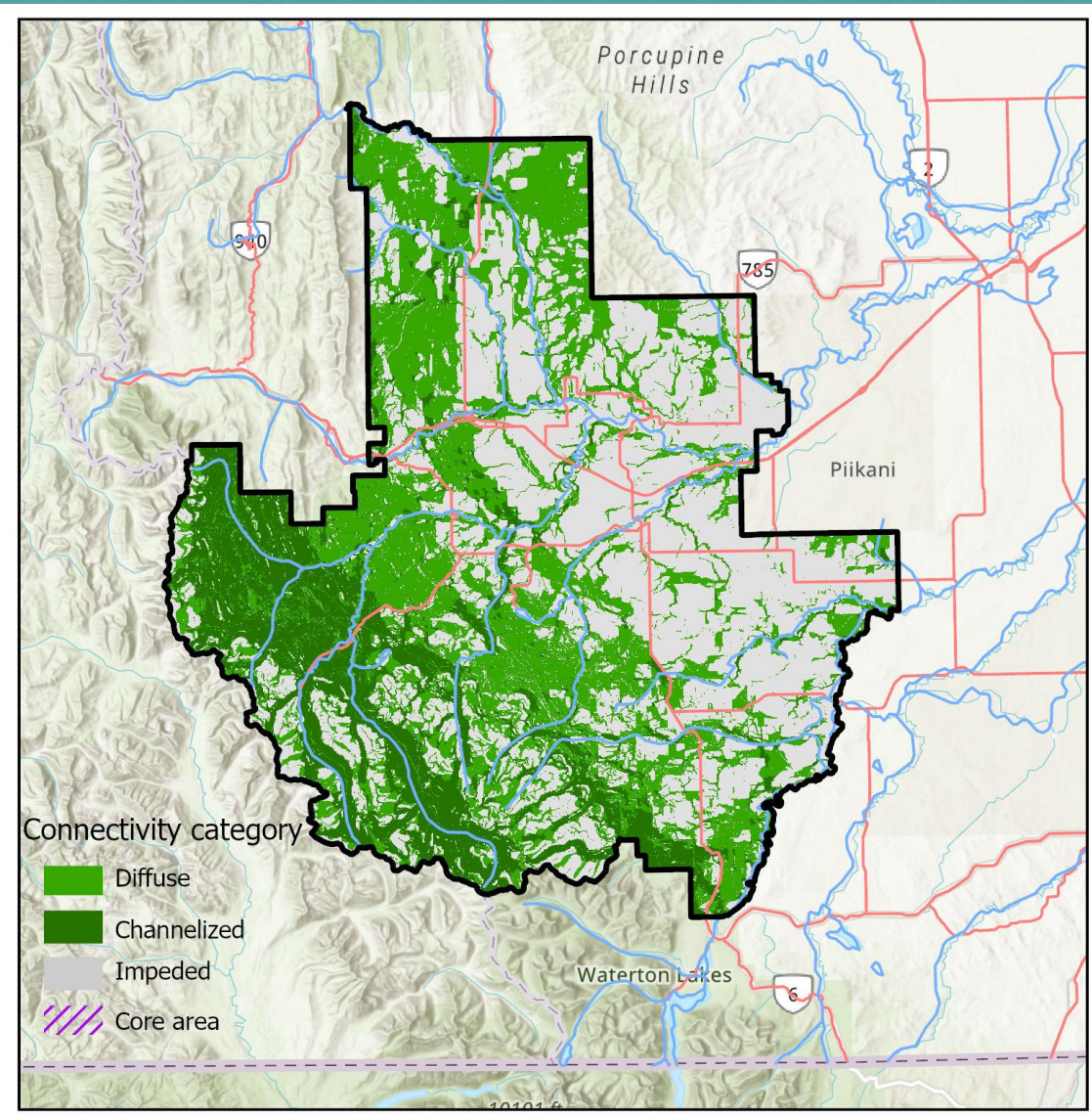


Elk strongly prefer high connectivity areas (bin 3-5) in all movement types.

The model shows **significantly increasing detection rates** as connectivity increases in bin number.

All results are **highly statistically significant.**

Connectivity Categories



Bin 3-5 represents (55%) important connectivity areas in MDPC

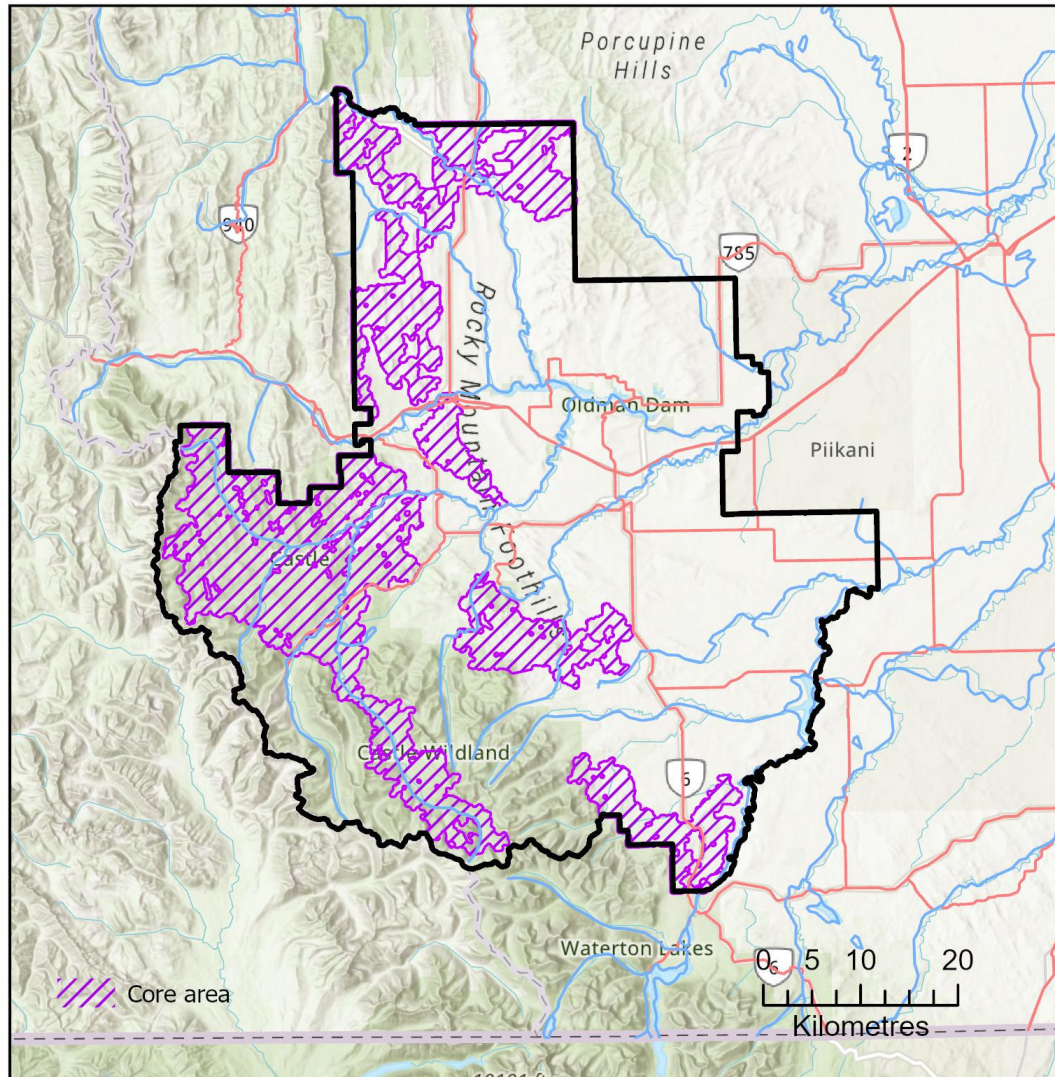
Three categories:

1. Channelized areas (bin 5) represent areas where flow is more concentrated (pinch points for wildlife movement).
2. Diffuse areas (bin 3 and 4) represent areas where flow is less concentrated (open areas for wildlife movement).
3. Impediment areas (bin 1-2) represent areas where flow is limited (difficult for wildlife movement).



Core Areas

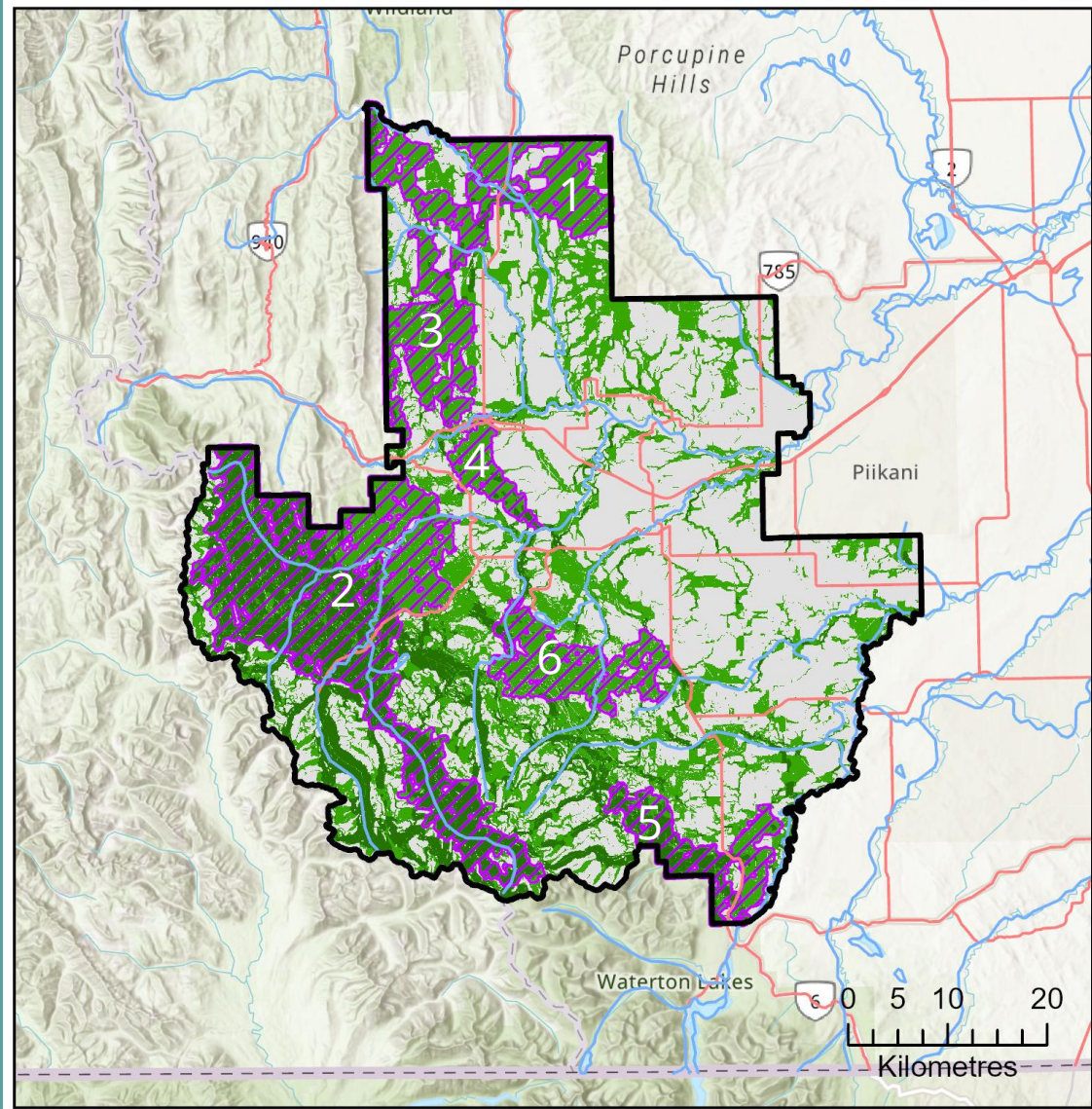
CORE AREA



- Extracted channelized and diffuse areas
- Pulled out areas greater than 15 square km (based on elk winter range)
- Six core areas



Connectivity and Core Areas

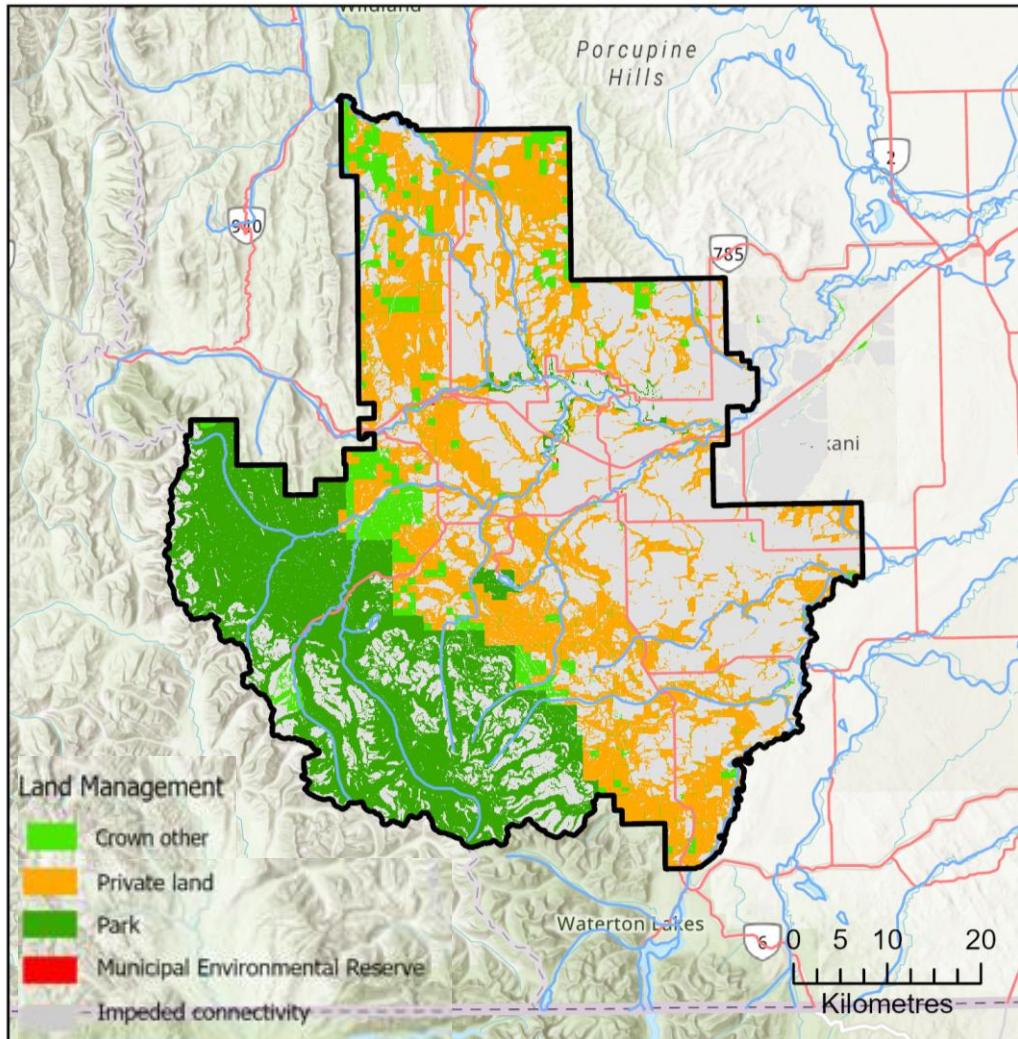


28% of MDPC is core area

How can we identify and prioritize strategies to maintain the network?

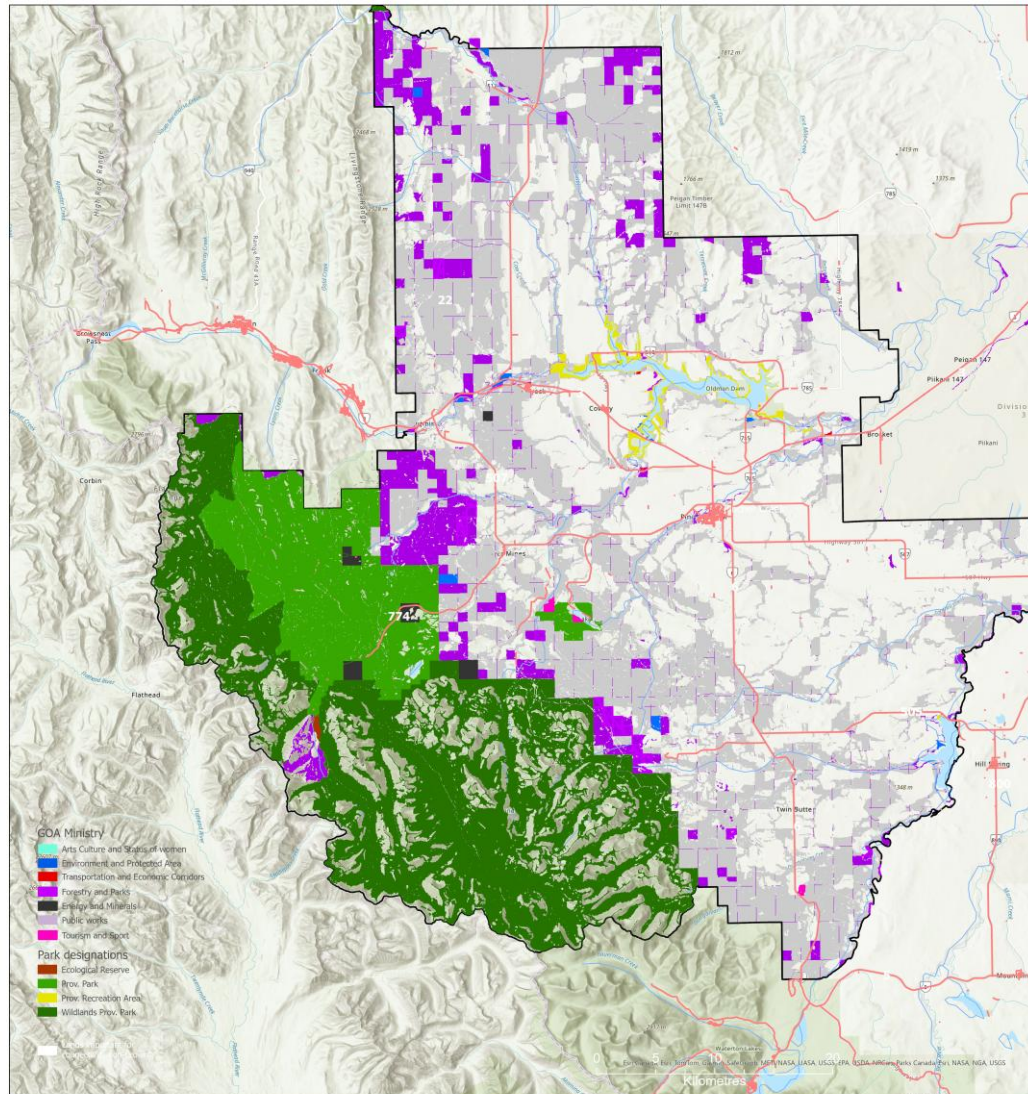


Land Management types

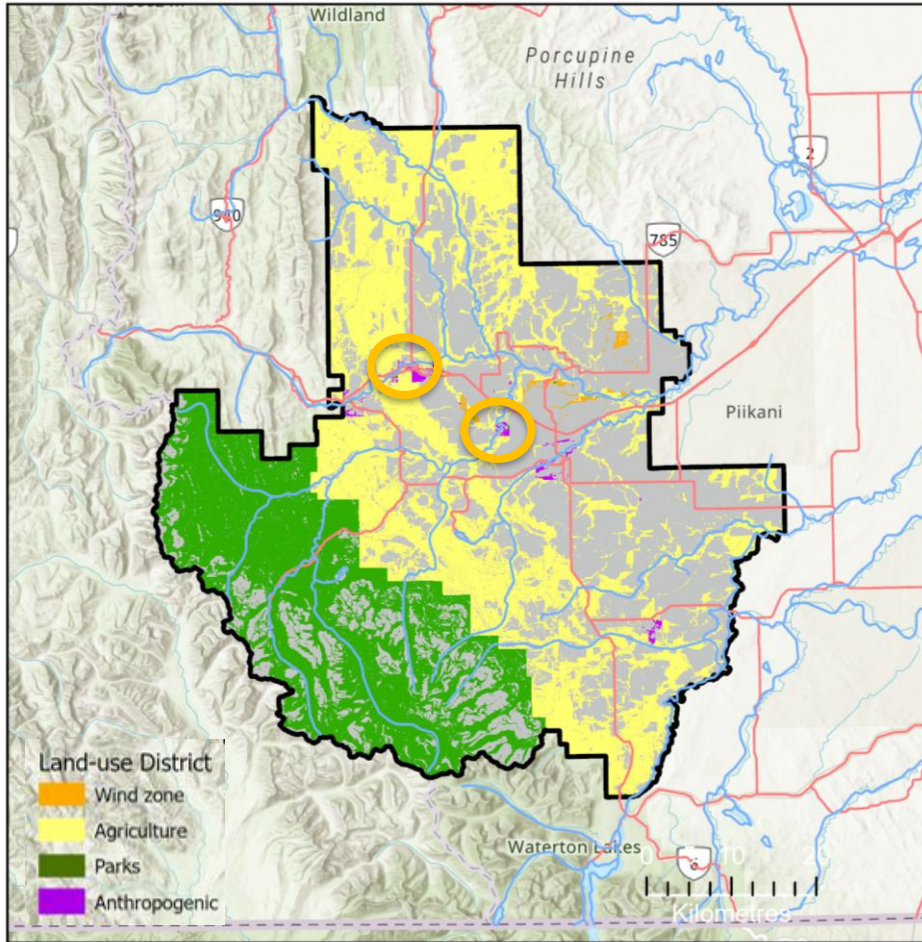


Land Management Type	Km ²	% of MD PC
Park	770.62	39.82
Crown - other	208.54	10.77
Private non-PLC	713.93	36.89
Private PLC	241.64	12.48
MD PC	0.75	0.04

Land Management types



Land Use Districts

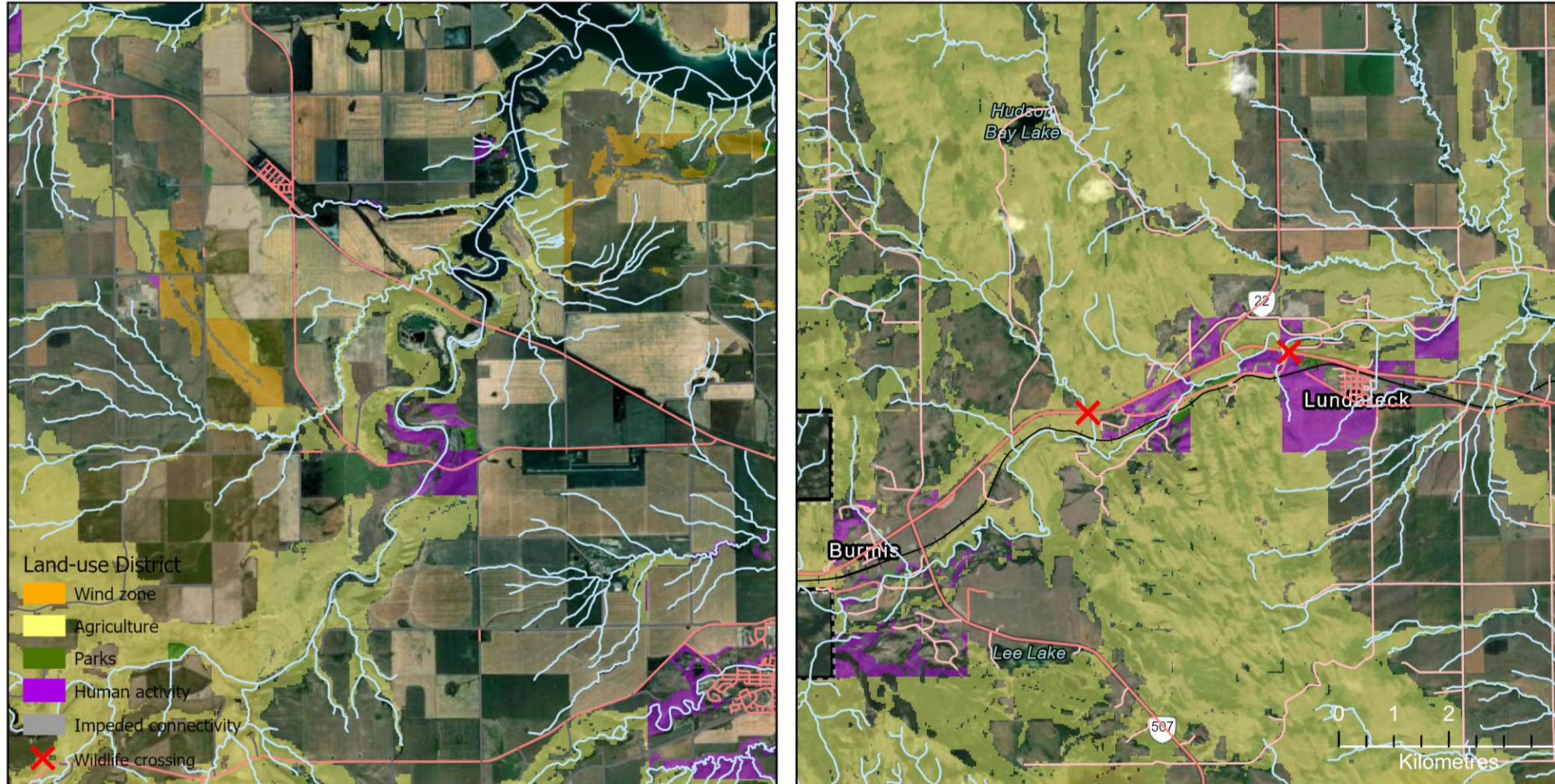


Land-use District	Km ²	% of MD PC
Park	755.75	39.05
Anthropogenic	11.56	0.60
Agriculture	1156.91	59.77
Agriculture wind	11.25	0.58

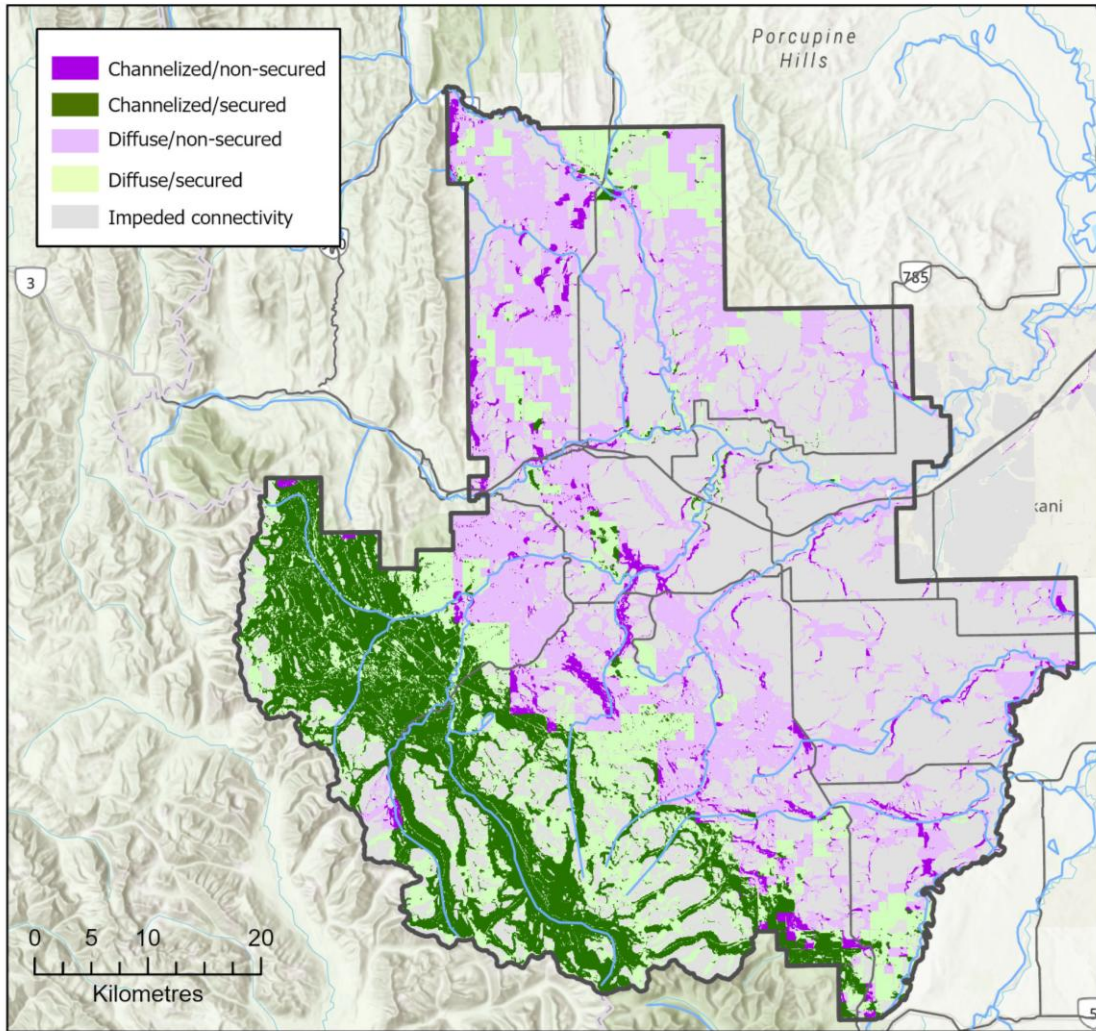
 Potential conflict zones

Land Use Districts

STRUCTURAL CONNECTIVITY AND MDPC LAND USE DISTRICTS

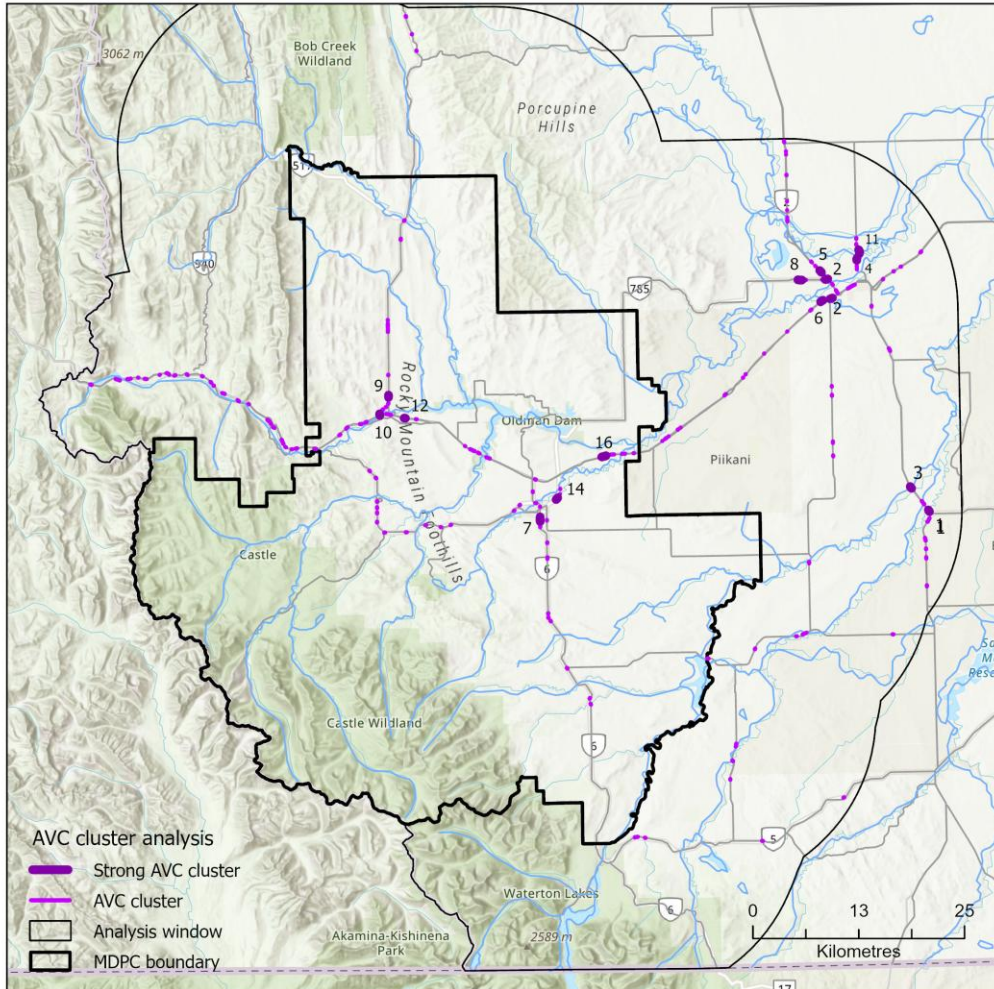


Private land Conservation

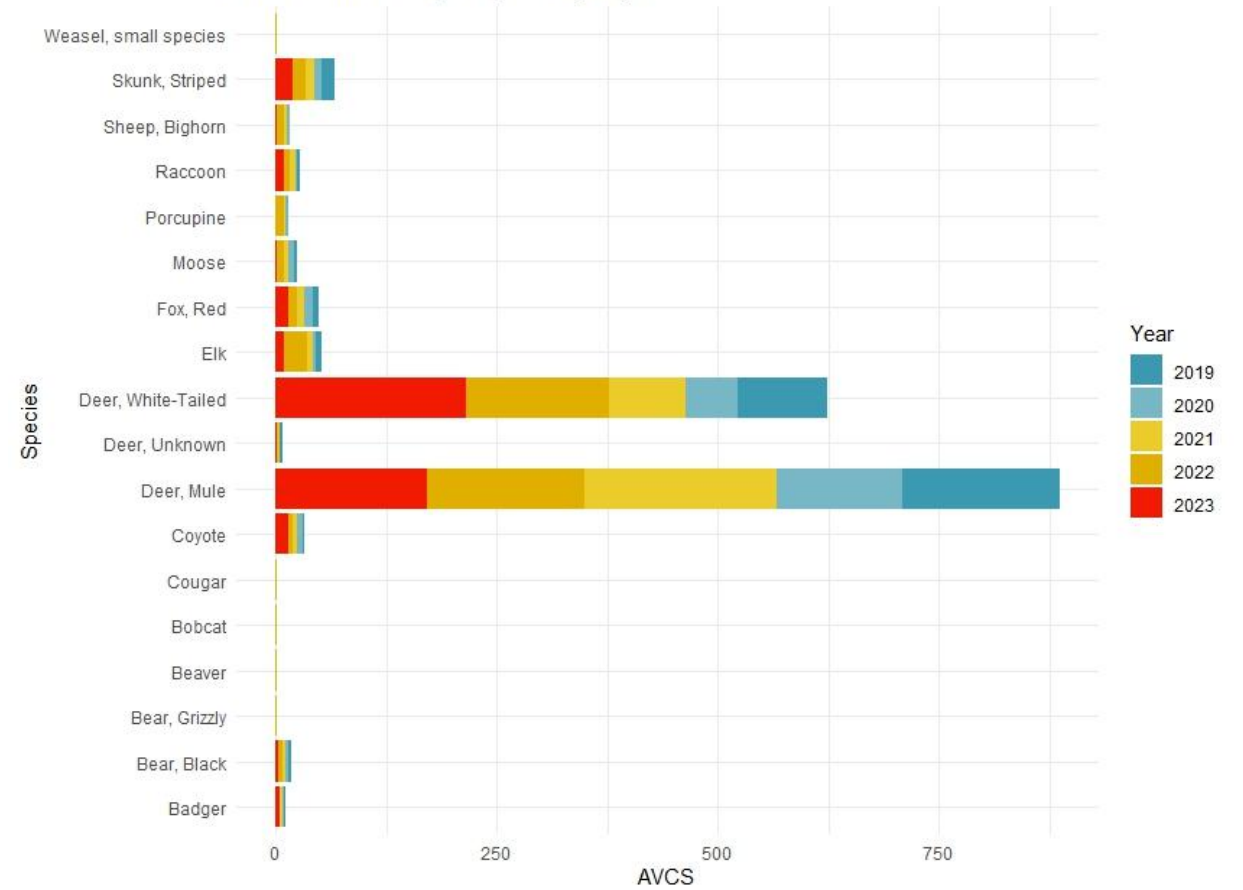


Animal Vehicle Collisions

ANIMAL VEHICLE COLLISION CLUSTERS

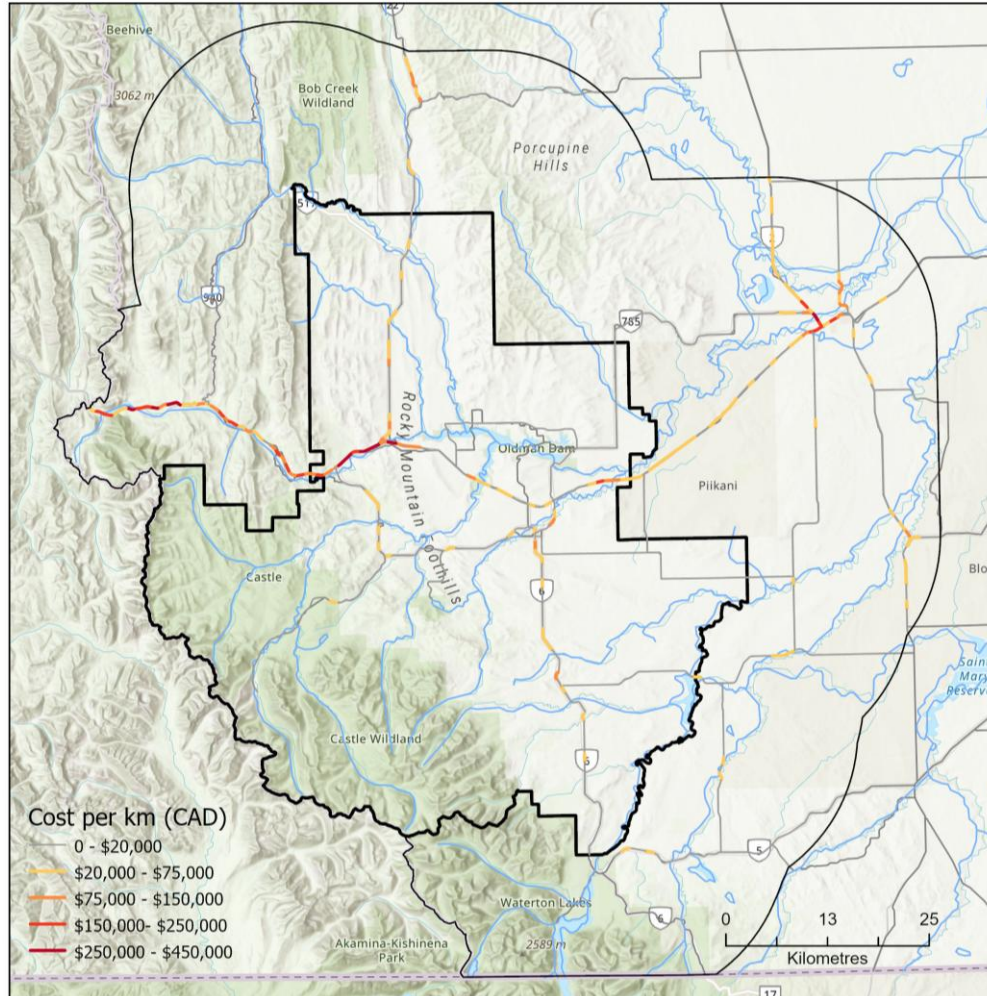


Number of AVCs per species per year

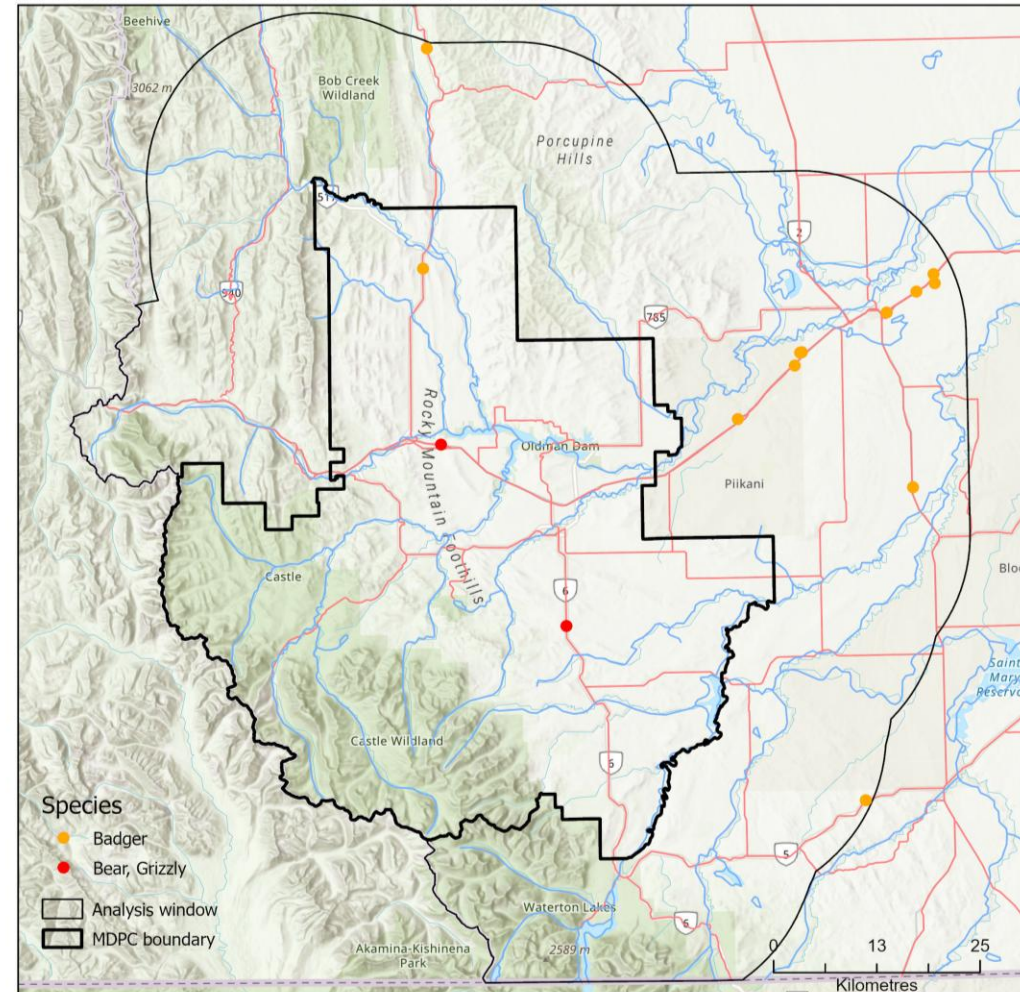


Animal Vehicle Collisions

AVC COST PER KM

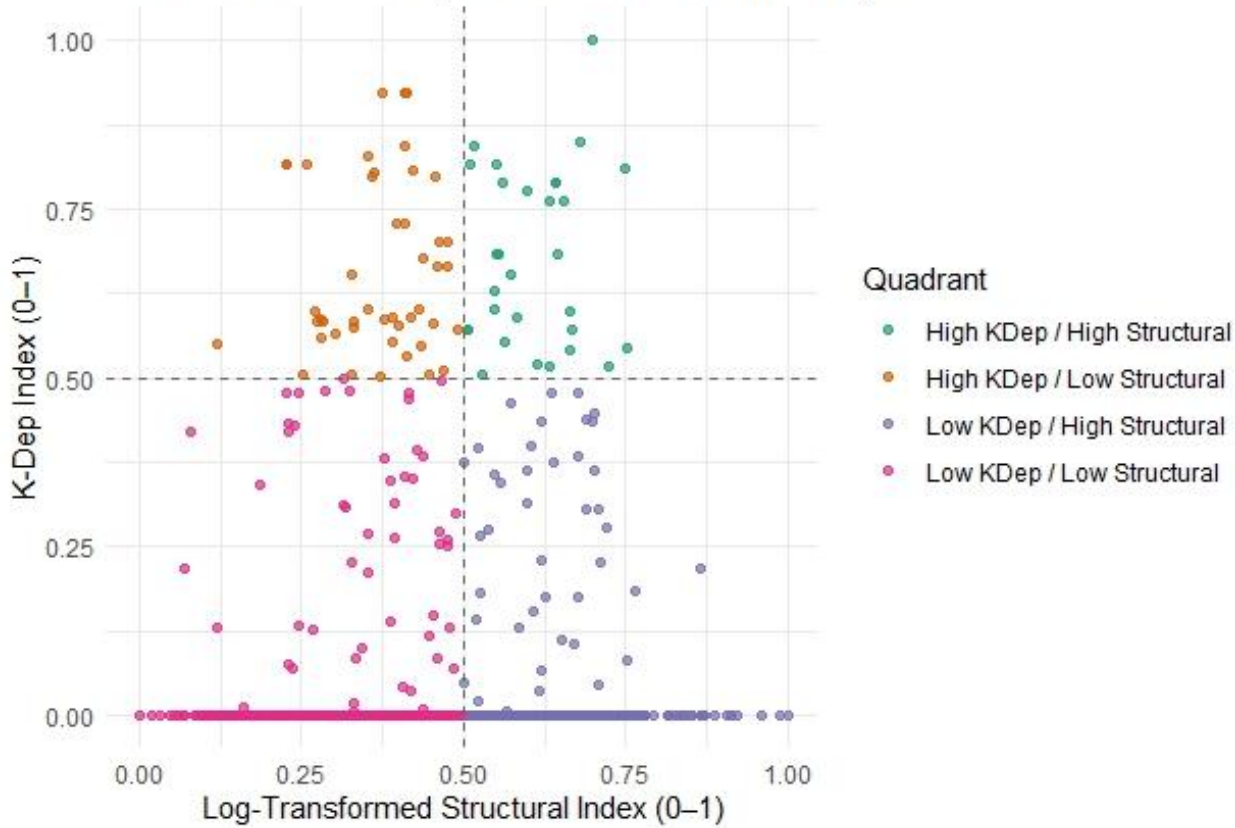


AVC FOR SPECIES OF SPECIAL CONCERN

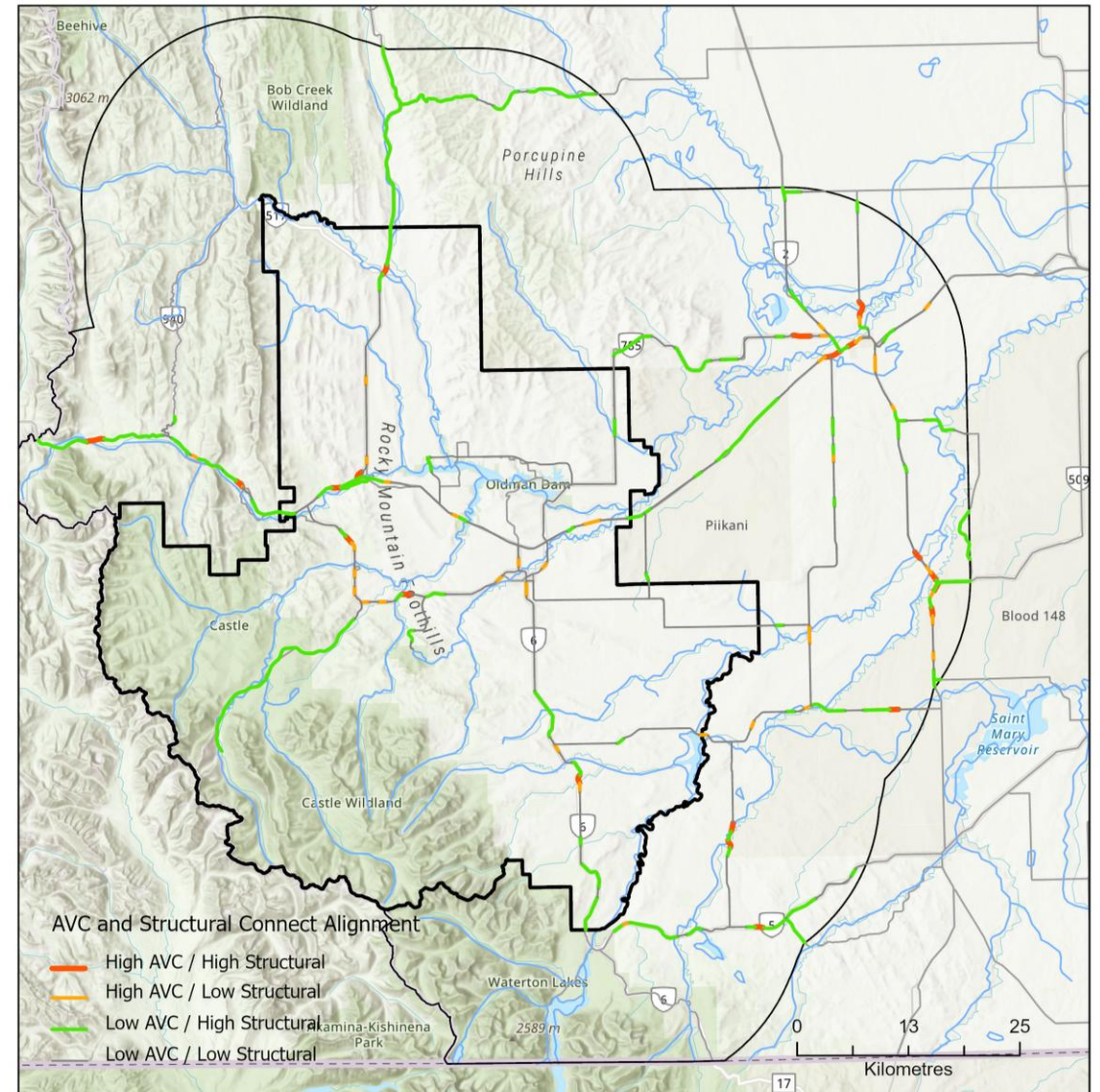


Animal Vehicle Collisions and Connectivity

Quadrant Plot: K-Dep vs Structural Connectivity



AVC AND STRUCTURAL CONNECTIVITY ALIGNMENT



Lessons Learned / Next steps

1. Two products – internal conservation planning vs. public engagement
 - Internal planning – benefit from diffuse and channelized categories and display per land management, private land secured/non secured and zoning. Helped prioritize and identify gaps.
 - Public interface – ecological network presented as one layer (core and corridors) and no categorization (diffuse and channelized) and simplify (smooth edges and drop small parcels)
2. Public land complexity – multiple ministries –what policies or tools enable management for wildlife movement (forming an internal working group)



Lessons Learned / Next steps

3. Language matters – core area vs. intact habitat.....
4. Operationalization – identified conflict areas based on municipal zoning and management type
5. Diffuse and channelized had different strategies (revisit and increase clarity on channelization category)
6. Neighbors matter – how do we connect to neighbours and scale up
7. Guidelines on what can and can-not occur in a movement area



Next steps

8. Develop connectivity plan that outlines strategies for maintaining the ecological network.



Thank you to:

- Alberta Real Estate Foundation
- Calgary Foundation
- National Parks Ecological Corridor Program
- Wilburforce Foundation
- Woodcock Foundation





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