

EAGLE POST 36

The newsletter of **Friends of Eagles Nest Wilderness**, apprising you of important activities in and around Eagles Nest, Holy Cross, and Ptarmigan Peak Wilderness Areas.

[VIEW IN BROWSER](#)



BEFORE WE BEGIN - BECOME A VOLUNTEER WILDERNESS RANGER - Applications are now open but time is short. Training day is SATURDAY JUNE 8. You will meet, greet, and teach Wilderness visitors, and will wear the same patch (right) as real Forest Service Wilderness Rangers. [More INFO.](#) View the application [here](#).



May 2019

Dear *|FNAME|*

Greetings! Our topic this month is

OVER & UNDER - Building safe highway crossings for wildlife in Colorado
Part 1: (THIS ISSUE): State Highway 9 in Grand County (completed in 2016)
Part 2 (JUNE ISSUE): Safe Passages on Vail Pass in Summit County

INTRODUCTION:

In 2016 CDOT and its partners completed the construction of seven wildlife crossings along State Highway 9 as it descends through the lower Blue River Valley. Five underpasses and two spectacular overpasses, plus an array of wildlife fencing, escape ramps, and wildlife guards were built (see [MAP](#) for details). Of course, the success of the project is being carefully monitored, which is the topic of this month's eNewsletter. Paige Singer and her colleagues from a variety of organizations are responsible for the research that documents many details of the project, now that it is built. But like pudding, for all the details of its creation, the proof is in the eating, and as Paige describes, the State Highway 9 (SH9) Project is proving to be phenomenally successful in preventing wildlife-vehicle collisions.

They are not resting on their laurels. Now, a new coalition of organizations, called [Summit County Safe Passages](#), which includes some organizations involved in the SH9 Project, is turning its attention to new targets, including the I-70 corridor in Summit County on Vail Pass. Paige co-leads that nascent effort, and will write about

it in next month's eNewsletter. If "nothing breeds success like success", Paige and her colleagues are destined for kudos once again.

State Highway 9 Wildlife and Safety Improvement Project: Paving the Way for Similar Projects Across Colorado

By Paige Singer



State Highway 9 was always an important roadway for my family - we lived in rural Craig - as we sought recreation opportunities in central Colorado, the big cities on the Front Range, and beyond. I have since moved away from Craig, but State Highway 9 - all 140 miles of it - remains a major transportation route for people traveling to and from Kremmling, Silverthorne, Breckenridge and Fairplay, all the way to its terminus near Canyon City and the Royal Gorge.

Yet this vital roadway is also the scene of numerous casualties. For example, from 1997 through 2016, there were more than 600 reported vehicular crashes just along an 11-mile stretch between the Colorado River south of Kremmling and the Grand-Summit county line, which resulted in 200 people injured and 16 people killed.

State Highway 9 runs through the lower reaches of the Blue River Valley, a vast sagebrush landscape that provides winter range and year-round habitat for wildlife like mule deer, elk, moose, bears and mountain lions. Animals that spend the summer up in Colorado's high country move down to the lower elevations on the valley floor to escape the deep snow and access the food and water they need to survive the winter. Because State Highway 9 is located low in the valley, wildlife, in particular mule deer, concentrate near the highway, sometimes crossing the roadway multiple times a day. With each crossing, they risk the possibility of colliding with oncoming traffic. Prior to 2016, more than 60 animals were killed in wildlife vehicle collisions (WVCs) on this stretch of road each winter.

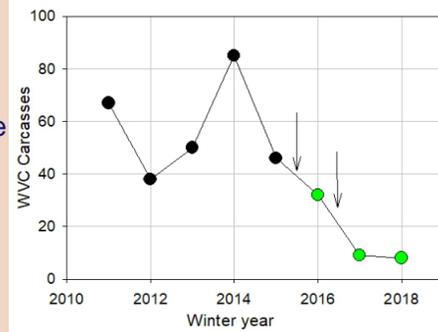


In order to address these safety issues, the State Highway 9 Wildlife and Safety Improvement Project ([SH9 Project](#)) was completed in late 2016 on the 11-mile stretch of State Highway 9 just south of Kremmling. This project included the construction of Colorado's first wildlife overpasses (two in count) and

five underpasses, allowing wildlife to travel safely over or under the highway. In addition to these large crossing structures, which are connected with 8-foot high wildlife exclusion fencing, small and medium species can use several smaller structures to cross under the roadway without being hit. Escape ramps, placed intermittently along the wildlife fence, provide an escape route for animals inadvertently trapped on the highway side of the fence.

Prior to construction of these wildlife crossing structures, an average of 56.4 vehicle

collisions with mule deer and elk occurred annually on this stretch of highway. WVCs were the most common type of accident reported to law enforcement, accounting for 60% of all accidents. As shown in the graph, since the construction of this mitigation project (completed in two phases as depicted by the



there has been nearly a 90% reduction in WVCs with mule deer and elk in the project area. Researchers have documented mule deer successfully using the wildlife crossing structures to move safely over or under the roadway more than 45,000 times. Some of these movements are by the same individuals but every time an animal used one of the crossing structures, the possibility of a collision with a vehicle was avoided! Mule deer aren't the only wildlife to use the crossings – elk, white-tailed deer, moose, bighorn sheep, pronghorn, bears, mountain lions, coyotes, red foxes, bobcats, badgers, hares, skunks, raccoons and even river otters have been documented safely crossing over or under the roadway by way of the crossing structures.



This SH9 project was the result of an unprecedented collaboration between [Colorado Parks and Wildlife](#), the [Colorado Department of Transportation](#), [Grand County](#), the privately-owned [Blue Valley Ranch](#) and the

Citizens for Safe Highway 9 committee as well as a number of other partners. Currently a team of researchers, led by Julia Kintsch from ECO-resolutions and Dr. Patricia Cramer, is studying the wildlife crossing structures and other components of the mitigation project to assess their effectiveness in allowing safe wildlife passage over or under State Highway 9 and reducing wildlife-vehicle collisions. The research study is funded by Colorado Parks and Wildlife and Colorado Department of Transportation with assistance from the [Woodcock Foundation](#), [Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation](#) and the [Muley Fanatic Foundation](#). If you haven't already, take a drive to check out Colorado's very first wildlife overpasses and see the project that is paving the way for similar projects around the state.

ABOUT PAIGE SINGER & COLLEAGUES:

Paige Singer, biologist and Geographical Information System (GIS) specialist with [Rocky Mountain Wild](#), is part of the research team studying wildlife crossing structures on State Highway 9 to determine their effectiveness at reducing wildlife-vehicle collisions while allowing

wildlife to move safely over or under the roadway. As a research assistant on the project, Paige works with these amazing people behind the research effort:



Paige & Zoey Singer



Dr. Patricia Cramer

Dr. Patricia Cramer is an independent researcher, nationally recognized in transportation wildlife research. She works with state departments of transportation and wildlife agencies to help research and design the best wildlife crossing and mitigation measures, and to bring wildlife considerations into the transportation planning process. Dr. Cramer's work has earned awards from Utah Department of Transportation (2015), Federal Highways Environmental Excellence Awards (2013, 2011), Utah Wildlife Society (2013), the Mule Deer Foundation (2012), and Denver Zoo (2010). She co-leads the State Highway 9 research effort with...

... [Julia Kintsch](#) is Senior Ecologist and Principal at [ECO-resolutions ecological resource consulting](#). She specializes in transportation ecology, wildlife connectivity, and the collaborative processes needed to achieve conservation objectives across large landscapes. For more than a decade, Julia has played an instrumental role in advancing the field of road ecology in Colorado. She co-leads the State Highway 9 research effort with Dr. Cramer.



Julia Kintsch



Michelle Cowardin

Michelle Cowardin is a wildlife biologist with Colorado Parks and Wildlife, and the lead biologist on the development of the State Highway 9 Wildlife and Safety Improvement Project. Michelle's wildlife expertise and passion for the project helped to make it a huge success. In addition to working extensively with the Colorado Department of Transportation during the design and construction phases, she is also the Colorado Parks and Wildlife project lead for the State Highway 9 research effort. When not keeping wildlife and the traveling public safe in the Blue River Valley, she works to preserve species of concern and habitat in the Middle Park area.

Joy Phelan is an independent researcher assisting primarily with retrieving, entering, and analyzing data. She has processed thousands of photos for the SH9 project and enjoys seeing how the local wildlife adapt to these structures. When not working on

photos, she's either working with the US Forest Service as a Fish and Wildlife Technician or going on adventures with her son.



Joy Phelan

A huge thanks to [ARAPAHOE BASIN SKI AREA](#). For more than two decades, A-Basin staff have donated generously to their **Employee Environmental Fund**, of which FENW has been a steady beneficiary. Last year, more than 150 employees donated, led by A-Basin Director **Alan Henceroth**. Our enduring THANKS!



Business Sponsor SPOTLIGHT on  ELITE THERAPEUTICS  one of our two major business sponsors. Developed by an oncologist for post-radiation skin therapy, [Elite](#) products provide soothing anti-aging benefits that are of special use in our intense, high altitude sunshine. Supplier to  Support ELITE - support FENW.

Make a donation to FENW....



... make a difference!

Join us in 2019
FENW TRAIL & CAMPSITE WORK
· Sat Jun 8 - Volunteer Wilderness Ranger Training
· Sat Jun 8 - National Trails Day with FDRD (Salt Lick Trail)
· Fri-Sun Jul 12-14 - Slate Lakes Overnight Trail & Campsite work with pack llamas

Follow us



The Spring 2019 hard copy newsletter will be ready soon.

Sent by mail, it will contain two dozen fun and informative articles,

- Fri-Sun Aug 9-11 - Gore Creek Overnight Trail & Campsite work with pack llamas
- Sat Aug 18 - WilderFest (Frisco Historic Park)
- Sat Aug 24 - Lily Pad Lake Trail Bridge Construction
- Dates TBD:
- Sierra Club Weed Pull
- Betty Ford Botanic Gardens Visit
NO EXPERIENCE NECESSARY!
Meet Dom and Powell, our llamas who will pack in tools and gear to the backcountry. Learn more [HERE](#).

Volunteer Wilderness Rangers met more than 10,000 wilderness visitors in 2018. Become a VWR in 2019 - training will be held on **Saturday, June 8**. Learn more [here](#).

Join us! for our next **Planning Meeting**
THURSDAY MAY 9, 5:30 PM,
USFS offices in Minturn & Silverthorne
(video link)
Details at www.fenw.org/

all of them about FENW - past, present, and future. If you didn't receive last fall's edition, then we *don't have your mailing address* - please send it to us at info@fenw.org .

Check out other [recent monthly eNewsletters](#)

CITY MARKET COMMUNITY REWARDS PROGRAM

Please [register](#) your City Market Value Card, linking it to FENW, which will send rebates to FENW without compromising your earned fuel points. Please note that each card holder may only sign up for one tax exempt organization. **THANKS!**



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State Highway 9 Phase 2

Structures

- Wildlife Guard
- Escape Ramp
- Fence End
- Overpass Structure
- Pedestrian Gate
- Small Culvert
- Underpass Structure

Mile Points

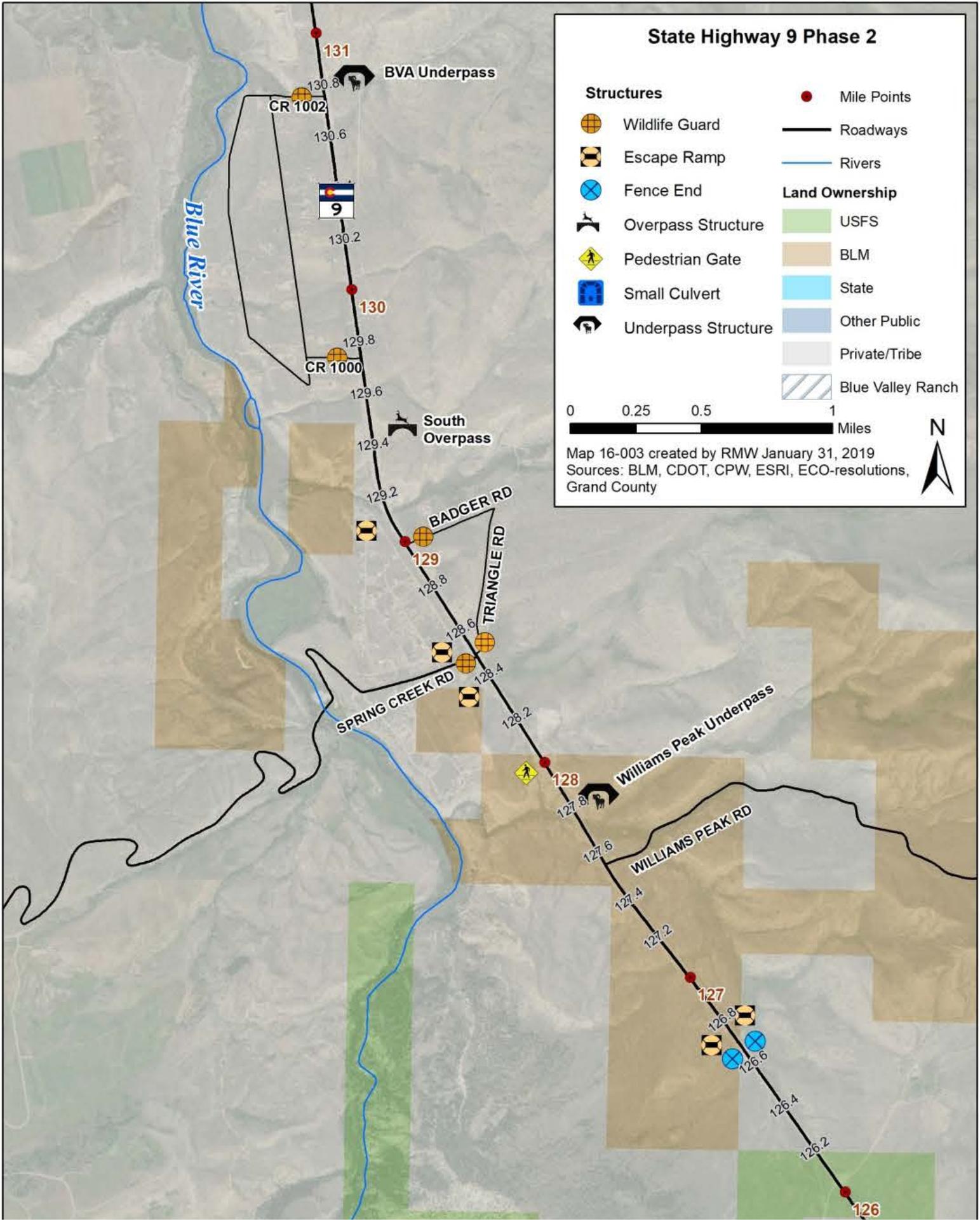
- Roadways
- Rivers

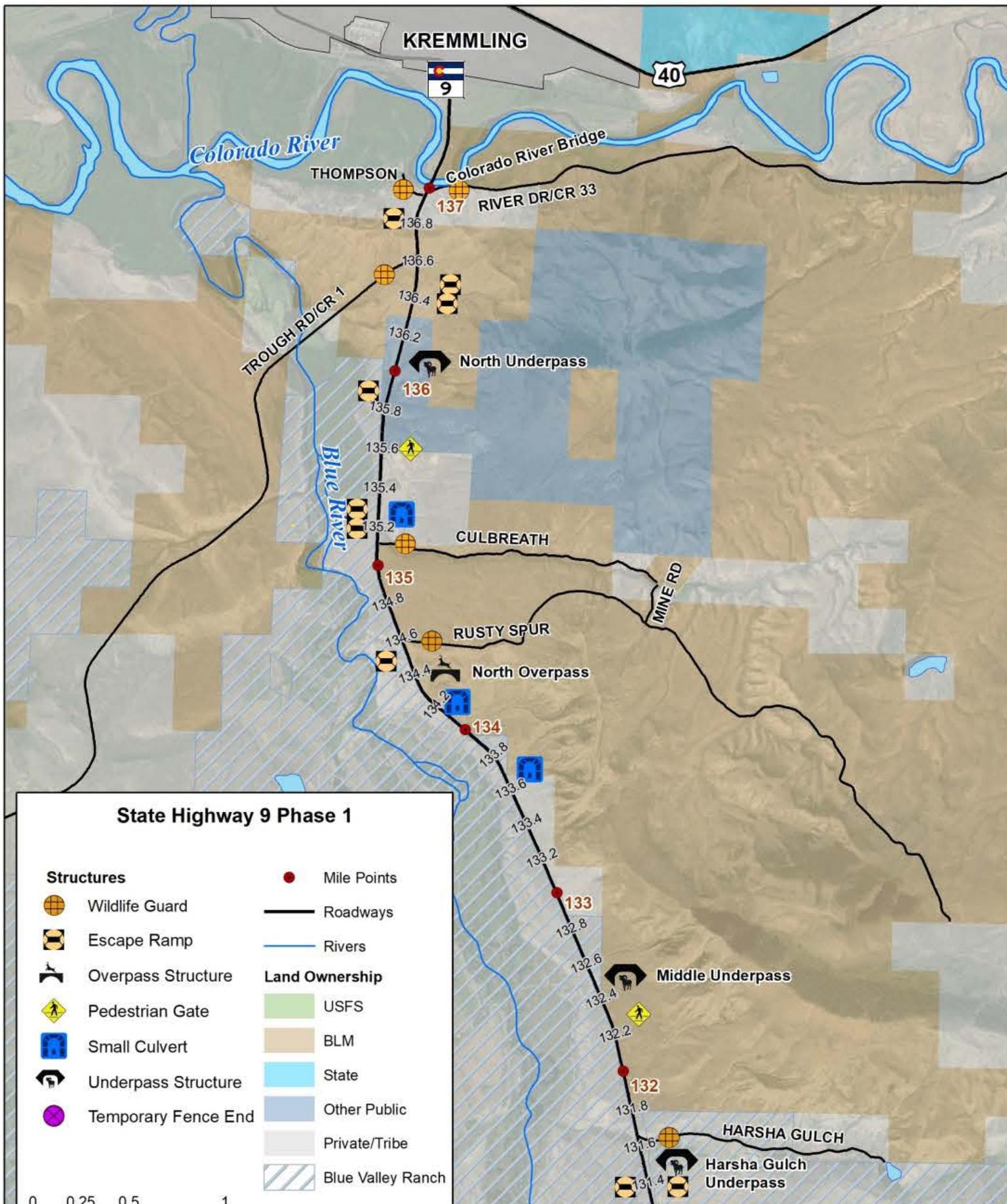
Land Ownership

- USFS
- BLM
- State
- Other Public
- Private/Tribe
- Blue Valley Ranch



Map 16-003 created by RMW January 31, 2019
 Sources: BLM, CDOT, CPW, ESRI, ECO-resolutions, Grand County





0 0.5 1 Miles

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Sources: BLM, CDOT, CPW, ESRI, ECO-resolutions,
Grand County

