



# Biological Resources

## Types of Impacts

- Expanding transportation facilities in the Corridor will result in direct loss of vegetation and wildlife habitat adjacent to the I-70 highway
  - Habitat for Canada lynx and Preble’s meadow jumping mouse (protected under Endangered Species Act) and elk, mule deer, and bighorn sheep (management indicator species for US Forest Service), and other mammals would be affected
- Widening the Corridor will further impede wildlife movement across the highway and further fragment wildlife habitat
- Removal, modification, and disturbance of habitat directly and indirectly affects fisheries and aquatic species
  - Increased sedimentation from erosion and stormwater runoff would affect fish habitat, including Gold Medal and high quality fisheries, aquatic species, and wetlands.
  - Sanding and deicing required for winter maintenance activities adversely impacts water quality; these activities increase for alternatives adding highway travel lanes.
- Construction will increase disturbance of vegetation and habitat, and noise and construction activity will cause wildlife to be displaced, at least temporarily, during the construction period.
- Construction disturbs native vegetation and provides an opportunity for noxious weeds to spread.



## Mitigation Strategies

- The lead agencies committed to two important agreements that will minimize existing and future impacts to wildlife and wildlife habitat:
  - A Landscape Level Inventory of Valued Ecosystems (ALIVE) Memorandum of Understanding outlines a process to reduce animal-vehicle collisions (such as improved signing) and increase habitat connectivity (such as improving wildlife crossing areas).
  - The Stream and Wetland Ecological Enhancement Program (SWEEP) Memorandum of Understanding establishes a framework to protect water and aquatic resources and habitat throughout the life cycle of projects on the I-70 Mountain Corridor.
- Sediment Control Action Plans on Straight Creek, Black Gore Creek, and Clear Creek to improve water quality and fish habitat will continue to be implemented.
- Contaminant runoff will be controlled to the greatest extent possible and continue efforts to decrease use of deicers and traction sand.
- New transportation facilities will be constructed within existing right-of-way to greatest extent possible to minimize impacts on habitat and wetlands.
- The lead agencies will work cooperatively with the United States Forest Service and local entities to identify areas of potential habitat restoration
- Noxious Weed Management Plans will be developed and implemented for all construction projects.