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PRESS RELEASE

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**COUNTY ROAD 53 PAVING COMPLETE AS ANIMAL SANCTUARY
ATTENDANCE EXPECTED TO DOUBLE THIS YEAR**

WELD COUNTY, CO – On Thursday, June 28, 2012, the Weld County Board of Commissioners will host a ribbon-cutting ceremony to mark the completion of paving County Road 53. The road, which leads to The Wild Animal Sanctuary (TWAS) in southern Weld County, received the upgrade from gravel to pavement because of increased traffic to the Sanctuary.

“The increased traffic Country Road 53 has experienced is good news for the Sanctuary and for Weld County,” said Commissioner Chairman Sean Conway. “We are glad people all along the Front Range are becoming aware of the work the Sanctuary does for neglected and abused animals, and they are taking the time to visit Weld County and support this charity.”

TWAS is the largest and oldest large-carnivore sanctuary in the country, and the only sanctuary in the world to provide large-acreage habitat for its animals.

Traffic counts taken on Country Road 53 last year showed that while traffic during the week was consistent with other gravel county roads in the area, weekend traffic increased dramatically and elevated the road’s maintenance and improvement level as determined by the Weld County Department of Public Works.

“Our Public Works department has a maintenance and improvement schedule for every road in the county,” said Commissioner Barbara Kirkmeyer. “When we looked at the traffic count information for this road, we saw typical traffic levels comparable to other area gravel roads in the area until you looked at the weekend numbers. Traffic counts over the weekend were double the weekday numbers, and the county determined that the road met the requirements for paving.”

In 2010, attendance records at TWAS reached approximately 50,000. In 2011, the number of visitors to the Sanctuary doubled to 100,000, and this year that number will likely increase 50-100% again.

“The Sanctuary has seen a tremendous increase in visitors during the past several years,” said Pat Craig, Executive Director of TWAS. “We are grateful for that increase, and we thank the county for the improvements to County Road 53. Paving the road makes sense for the county with regard to maintenance, and it may help even more visitors make the trip to visit the animals.”

A ribbon cutting ceremony will be held at The Wild Animal Sanctuary entrance 1946 County Road 53, Keenesburg, at 2:00 p.m. Parking is available in the Sanctuary’s north lot (transportation to the entrance from the parking lot will be provided).

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