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Wildlands Network, Defenders of Wildlife, Endangered Species Coalition, Humane Society Legislative Fund, International Fund for Animal Welfare, National Parks Conservation Association, Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative, Center for Large Landscape Conservation, E.O. Wilson Biodiversity Foundation

## **Landmark Bipartisan Legislation to Protect Wildlife Corridors Passes the U.S. House of Representatives**

***The Moving Forward Act would protect and restore wildlife corridors and provide significant funding to reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions nationally***

WASHINGTON, D.C. (July 1, 2020) — Marking a significant step for U.S. wildlife conservation, the bipartisan [Wildlife Corridors Conservation Act](#) along with the INVEST in America Act, which includes \$300 million for projects to reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions nationally, passed the U.S. House of Representatives as part of H.R. 2, the Moving Forward Act. These important provisions will stimulate the U.S. economy, reduce highway fatalities and safeguard wildlife.

With one in five U.S. species at risk of extinction, biodiversity loss and disruption of natural wildlife habitats are among the nation's greatest conservation challenges. Connecting habitats through corridors and crossings enables wildlife to access resources for survival, and to migrate and better adapt to changing landscapes and climate.

The Wildlife Corridors Conservation Act was introduced by Representatives Don Beyer (D-VA) and Vern Buchanan (R-FL). The Act:

- grants authority to key federal agencies to develop a National Wildlife Corridor System on federal public land.
- creates a \$50 million per year Wildlife Movement Grant Program to incentivize the protection of wildlife corridors by state and tribal agencies and interested private landowners on non-federal lands.
- contains the Tribal Wildlife Corridors Act, introduced by Representative Ruben Gallego (D-AZ).
- creates a Wildlife Connectivity Database that will be freely available to states, tribes, federal agencies, and the public to support decisions about wildlife corridors.

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A companion bill to the Wildlife Corridors Conservation Act has been introduced in the Senate by Senator Tom Udall (D-NM).

“With time running out to protect key iconic species, the House just took decisive action by passing the Wildlife Corridors Conservation Act. Years ago, during my first term, I had the opportunity to meet with one of my heroes, the legendary Dr. E.O. Wilson; his argument for protecting biodiversity and his proposed solutions for doing so were the seed of this legislation. As he pointed out, simply providing wildlife the opportunity to move across lands and waters is one of the simplest and most effective ways to help preserve the many species in the U.S. at risk of extinction due to habitat loss and fragmentation. This is a great day for wildlife protection.”

- Representative Don Beyer (D-VA)

Connecting wildlife corridors is a conservation strategy that is gaining broad support across the country. Last year alone, a dozen states pursued wildlife corridor protection legislation, including Florida, Wyoming, Mississippi, New Hampshire, Oregon, New Mexico, Utah and Virginia. While states are initiating wildlife corridor and crossing protection, funding to implement these efforts is sorely needed. The Moving Forward Act provides access to significant dollars for landowners, states, federal land managers and tribes to work together to collaboratively protect wildlife.

“Protecting wildlife corridors and crossings is a commonsense way to stimulate our economy and support rural jobs while protecting biodiversity. We thank Representatives Beyer, Buchanan and Gallego for their leadership to protect both jobs and America’s wildlife. From elk to grizzlies to the beautiful monarch butterfly, wildlife needs to move across the landscape to survive. In the face of climate change, protecting wildlife corridors will ensure our wildlife will survive for generations to come. We urge the Senate to quickly pass this important legislation.”

- Susan Holmes, Federal Policy Director, Wildlands Network

Reported collisions between motorists and wildlife cause more than 200 human fatalities and over 26,000 injuries each year, at an annual cost to Americans of more than \$8 billion. More than one million large animals are killed annually by motorists on U.S. roads—roughly one every 26 seconds. Numerous research studies show that wildlife crossing structures and fencing that guide animals

over or under our nation's highways are highly effective, reducing wildlife-vehicle collisions by up to 97%.

Within the Moving Forward Act, the INVEST Act:

- includes \$300 million in dedicated funding for wildlife-vehicle collision reduction projects from the National Highway Performance Program.
- provides state and federal agencies the option to utilize other program dollars, and establishes critical reporting and training opportunities on the topic.

These provisions complement language that unanimously passed the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works with bipartisan support last July. Such funding will support state, tribal and federal efforts to reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions to protect motorists and allow wildlife to safely cross highways.

The bill is supported by nationally recognized scientists, including renowned biologist [Dr. E.O. Wilson](#), [recreation companies including Patagonia](#) and more than [220 prominent NGOs](#) nationwide.

"One of the foreseeable environmental crises of the future is the extinction of our native fauna and flora by careless human activity. Passing the Wildlife Corridors Conservation Act as part of the stimulus package is an effective way to avoid this tragic event."

- Dr. E.O. Wilson

"Patagonia's business depends on healthy natural places where people can recreate and wildlife can thrive. Our outdoor industry contributes 7.6 million jobs and \$887 billion to the American economy, and in times like these we need legislation like the Moving Forward Act. This bill invests in wildlife corridor infrastructure to support healthy lands, wildlife and communities. We thank the leadership of Representatives Beyer, Buchanan and Gallego in protecting our lands, waters, and wildlife while also boosting our economy and jobs."

- Alison Huyett, Environmental Campaigns Manager at Patagonia

"The Moving Forward Act includes important wins for fish, wildlife and plants contending with increasing habitat fragmentation and climate change. Funding for wildlife infrastructure like corridors will also help create jobs and stimulate economies in communities across the country. The Wildlife Corridors

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Conservation Act has had bipartisan support in Congress, and we are hopeful that this provision will now become law.

- Jamie Rappaport Clark, President and CEO, Defenders of Wildlife

“Habitat fragmentation is a major driver of species decline and an impediment to recovering imperiled wildlife. We thank the bill sponsors and supporters for recognizing the important role of corridors in helping our fish and wildlife migrate and move about the landscape.”

- Leda Huta, Executive Director of the Endangered Species Coalition

“Every congressional bill is an opportunity to debate the importance of animal protection in our society and today the House “moved us forward” by including – and passing – language to create a National Wildlife Corridors System and related grant programs in their major infrastructure package. Providing for the safety of wildlife in our transportation systems and infrastructure is a critical component of bringing our infrastructure into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We thank the Wildlife Corridors Conservation Act sponsors for their sound leadership to ensure these critical animal welfare and safety provisions pass the House, and we urge the Senate to swiftly follow suit.”

- Sara Amundson, President, Humane Society Legislative Fund

“Habitat loss and fragmentation is the top driver of biodiversity loss around the globe. Wildlife corridors and crossings not only help to maintain healthy wildlife populations, they also protect human health and wellbeing by preventing collisions and protecting the ecosystems upon which we all depend. We applaud Representatives Beyer, Buchanan, and Gallego for their leadership on these important initiatives.”

- Kate Wall, Senior Legislative Manager at the International Fund for Animal Welfare

“Climate change is happening now and the effects are threatening some of our country’s most iconic national park wildlife. Park ecosystems are changing more every day, and migratory wildlife have long been challenged by roads and other obstacles as they move in and out of parks. The Moving Forward Act is a critical step in collaboratively addressing these challenges and protecting national park wildlife. NPCA commends the many members of the House of Representatives who have sponsored, cosponsored and advocated for the innovative wildlife-focused portions of the bill.”

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- Bart Melton, Wildlife Program Director, National Parks Conservation Association

"This act confirms America's bipartisan commitment to ensuring that both people and nature thrive in a changing world. Wildlife crossings are cost-effective solutions that keep people and animals safer on our highways, and funding to secure and restore habitat in critical corridors will allow us to enjoy abundant wildlife populations for generations to come."

- Kim Trotter, U.S. Program Director, Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative

"By supporting the creation of much-needed wildlife crossing structures and safeguarding critical wildlife corridors, the Moving Forward Act protects people, economies, and wildlife—now and into the future. Connected habitat and unimpeded routes of migration are necessary to sustain our nation's wildlife heritage. Wildlife need to move to fulfill their survival needs—to feed, to reproduce, and to seek refuge. This legislation passed by the House today positions the U.S. as an international leader in habitat connectivity and wildlife conservation."

- Gary Tabor, President of the Center for Large Landscape Conservation

### **Resources**

- A list of wildlife crossing and road mitigation job creation projects that would benefit from federal infrastructure and stimulus funding can be found [here](#).