



U.S. Policies to Conserve Ecological Connectivity Since 2007

**Volume III: 2007-2008 and 2016-2019
Federal, State and Select County Resolutions**



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Authors' Note: *This document is Volume 3 of a three-volume series. To view Volumes 1 and 2, visit:*

Volume 1: [Recent Progress on Wildlife Corridor and Ecological Connectivity Policy in the United States 2007-2010](#)

Volume 2: [New Policies with the Potential to Improve Wildlife Corridors and Ecological Connectivity](#)

INTRODUCTION

This paper is the third volume in a set of policy reviews that the Center has developed. The series begins with the 2011 publication of [*Recent Progress on Wildlife Corridor and Ecological Connectivity Policy in the United States 2007-2010*](#). The 2011 report was followed by Volume 2, [*New Policies with the Potential to Improve Wildlife Corridors and Ecological Connectivity*](#), published in 2016.

In this volume, we return to 2007-2008 in order to capture some of the first important regional and federal policies addressing ecological connectivity in the U.S. We continue with federal policies adopted following the completion of the second volume of the series in 2016.

Across the nation, policies on ecological connectivity and federal, state, and county attention to wildlife corridor conservation have significantly expanded. The 2019 calendar year marked the passage of resolutions or legislation promoting wildlife corridors in 6 states, with 15 total state directives issued from 2016-2019. By comparison, we compiled 3 state policies from 2012-2015 and 4 in 2007-2008. New federal and regional policies grew from 5 in 2007-2008 to 11 in 2009-2011 and 12 in 2012-2015. However, only 2 new federal policies were issued from 2016-2019, with 3 more issued by tribal and regional entities in the same time period, so successful national and cross-boundary action has decreased recently.

Across the three volumes, we have been able to summarize all federal and state policies issued in support of ecological connectivity since 2007. In this volume, for the first time, we also include select county policies on connectivity from recent years. Due to the diversity of county policies, only a portion of what may exist at the local government level is captured in this volume. The authors are responsible for any oversight or omission of any significant federal or state policies, as well.

As awareness of the importance of ecological connectivity grows, many recent policy initiatives focus upon highway crossings for wildlife, while others focus on maintaining habitat connectivity through additional avenues, such as the preservation of wildlife corridors and migratory pathways. Ecological connectivity can be defined as the degree to which landscapes allow species to move freely and ecological processes to function unimpeded.¹ In a well-connected landscape, nutrient flows, energy flows, predator-prey relationships, pollination, seed dispersal, and many other ecological processes are maintained.

¹ *UNEP* (2019). *Frontiers* 2018/19 Emerging Issues of Environmental Concern. United Nations Environment Programme, Nairobi.

FEDERAL AND REGIONAL POLICIES, 2007-2008

- **Western Governors' Association Policy Resolution 07-01: Protecting Wildlife Corridors and Crucial Wildlife Habitat in the West** (February 27, 2007). In what is regarded as the first regional statement on corridors, the Western Governors' Association resolves "the Western States, working in partnership with the federal land management agencies, Department of Defense, Western and National Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, the energy industry, and conservation groups, should identify key wildlife migration corridors and crucial wildlife habitats in the West and make recommendations on needed policy options and tools for preserving those landscapes." The resolution further establishes a "wildlife migration corridors and critical habitats working group to oversee staff's implementation of this resolution," particularly its directive that Congress "remove the categorical exclusion for NEPA reviews for exploration or development of oil and gas in wildlife corridors and critical wildlife habitat on federal lands."
- **Presidential Order 13443: Facilitation of Hunting Heritage and Wildlife Conservation** (August 16, 2007); *signed by President George W. Bush*. This order directs federal agencies to enhance hunting along with the management of game species and their habitats. Further, the order directs the convening of a White House Conference on Wildlife Policy, held Oct 2-3, 2008, in Reno, NV, which culminated in a 10-year action plan called the Recreational Hunting and Wildlife Conservation Plan. The plan prioritizes the protection of wildlife corridors through easements or acquisition and mapping of high importance habitat and corridors, along with their inclusion in NEPA analyses of oil and gas leasing. It also recommends "creation of incentives for federal land managers to partner on wildlife corridor conservation with private landowners and industry on landscape-scale approaches through coordinated development and conservation planning."

[Presidential Order 13443: Facilitation of Hunting Heritage and Wildlife Conservation](#)

- **U.S. Forest Service Pronghorn Migration Corridor Forest Plan Amendment** (May 31, 2008). The Bridger-Teton National Forest designated a pronghorn migration corridor covering approximately 47,000 acres within its Pinedale and Jackson Ranger Districts and amended its Forest Plan such that "[a]ll projects, activities, and infrastructure authorized in the designated Pronghorn Migration Corridor will be designed, timed and/or located to allow continued successful migration of the pronghorn that summer in Jackson Hole and winter in the Green River basin." The Amendment protects the 43-mile extent of the 90-mile migration corridor on U.S. Forest Service land, noting that "[the] Forest Service by itself cannot guarantee continued successful migration of this herd over the entire migration route...[due to] numerous factors beyond Forest Service control such as activities on lands under other jurisdictions within the migration route."

[U.S.F.S. Bridger-Teton Pronghorn Migration Corridor Forest Plan Amendment](#)

- **U.S. Forest Service Strategic Framework for Responding to Climate Change** (October 2, 2008). Prepared at the direction of U.S. Forest Service Chief Gail Kimball, the framework describes the "development of wildlife corridors to facilitate wildlife migration" as one of several "anticipatory actions intended to prevent serious disruptions due to changing climate." The Framework states "[e]cosystem health and resilience, productivity, biological diversity, and carbon storage are

likely to decrease over large areas without direct intervention and management,” such that the Forest Service should “assist private landowners and communities to voluntarily implement adaptation techniques on their lands, and...work collaboratively with other federal agencies and international partners.” Further, the Framework emphasizes that “[m]aintaining ecosystem services while contributing to mitigation will require integrated, landscape-level and regional approaches to management across ownerships.”

[U.S.F.S. Strategic Framework for Responding to Climate Change](#)

- **Bureau of Land Management Trapper’s Point Area of Critical Environmental Concern²** (November 26, 2008). Under the Pinedale Field Office’s Resource Management Plan revision, an area known as Trapper’s Point along Wyoming’s Path of the Pronghorn migration route was formally-designated an Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) to “[p]reserve the viability of the big game migration bottleneck, cultural and historic resources, and important livestock trailing use.” In accordance with this decision, the following regulations apply: “a. Surface disturbing activities are prohibited except those to enhance the viability of the big game migration...b. A portion of the ACEC (4,160 acres) is closed to land disposal and mineral location...c. No additional fences will be constructed in the ACEC area except to enhance the viability of the big game migration. d. The ACEC is unavailable for oil and gas leasing. e. OHV [off-highway vehicle] use is limited to designated roads and trails and is closed from November 15 to April 30.”

[B.L.M. Pinedale Field Office Resource Management Plan](#)



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² *Authors’ Note:* The BLM’s preferred alternative was a 550-acre ACEC; the area was increased to 9450 acres at the request of the Governor of Wyoming, the size suggested in the most environmentally-sensitive alternative. Under the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, “[State and local] officials in each State are authorized to furnish advice to the Secretary with respect to the development and revision of land use plans, land use guidelines, land use rules, and land use regulations for the public lands within such State and with respect to such other land use matters as may be referred to them by [the Secretary]....” <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/USCODE-2017-title43/html/USCODE-2017-title43-chap35.htm> (USC 43 § 1720 (2017)).

STATE POLICIES, 2007-2008

- **Washington State: Department of Transportation Executive Order 1031: Protections and Connections for High Quality Habitats** (July 23, 2007); *signed by Secretary of Transportation Douglas B. MacDonald. Amended and Reaffirmed 2013 and 2019.* The Executive Order (EO) states that the “Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), in partnership with other agencies, organizations, and the public, must assure that road and highway programs recognize, together with other needs, the importance of protecting ecosystem health, the viability of aquatic and terrestrial wildlife species, and the preservation of biodiversity.” EO 1031 further specifies “[t]ransportation planning should recognize and respond to particular concerns and opportunities for habitat preservation and the need for habitat connections,” and states the intention of WSDOT “[t]o locate specific opportunities to restore habitat connectivity already damaged by human transportation corridors.”

Moreover, the order suggests collaboration with additional agencies to develop a “statewide habitat connectivity plan” and is credited with helping to bring about the Washington Wildlife Habitat Connectivity Working Group, co-led by WSDOT and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife.

[Overview: WA Department of Transportation Executive Order 1031](#)

- **Arizona: Arizona Missing Linkages: 2007 and 2008 Design Reports.** Following the development of Arizona’s Wildlife Linkages Assessment, a 2006 statewide overview developed by Arizona Game and Fish Department (AZGFD), Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT), Federal Highway Administration, U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, Northern Arizona University, Sky Island Alliance and the Wildlands Project, ADOT funded the development of “detailed linkage designs” to maintain connectivity between “wildland blocks” in 16 priority areas highlighted in the Assessment. AZGFD has subsequently built upon this work by holding stakeholder workshops in each county to gain additional input.

[Arizona Missing Linkages: 2007 and 2008 Design Reports](#)

- **Wyoming: Greater Sage-Grouse Core Area Protection Executive Order 2008-2** (August 1, 2008); *signed by Governor Dave Freudenthal.* This executive order establishes a Core Area Protection strategy identified by the state’s Sage Grouse Implementation Team and recognized by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as a “sound framework,” under which activities to maintain and enhance habitats and sage-grouse populations are prioritized. The order also provides for the creation of incentives “to enable development of all types outside Core Protected Areas,” provided that such developments are “designed and managed to maintain populations, habitats and essential migration routes....”

[WY Greater Sage-Grouse Core Area Protection Executive Order 2008-2](#)

- **California: AB 2785: Wildlife Conservation: Habitat Connectivity** (September 26, 2008); *signed by Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger.* This law directs the California Department of Fish and Game (DFG) to “investigate, study, and identify those areas in the state that are most essential as wildlife corridors and habitat linkages...[and] to develop and maintain a spatial data system

that identifies those areas in the state that are most essential for maintaining habitat connectivity, including wildlife corridors and habitat linkages.” Further, under the law, required datasets and associated analytical products are to be made available to the public and other government entities.

AB 2785 is described as one of two directives leading to the California Essential Habitat Connectivity Project, a joint effort of the California Department of Transportation and DFG, the goal of which is to identify large remaining blocks of intact habitat or natural landscape and model linkages between them that need to be maintained, particularly as corridors for wildlife.

[CA AB 2785: Wildlife Conservation: Habitat Connectivity](#)

[CA Essential Habitat Connectivity Project](#)



NEW FEDERAL AND REGIONAL POLICIES, 2016-2019

- **Western Governors’ Association Policy Resolution 2019-08: Wildlife Migration Corridors and Habitat (June 6, 2019).** In the most recent of the Western Governors’ Association’s regular policy resolutions on wildlife corridors [see entry, 2007], the Western Governors “encourage dialogue among relevant partners in the West to identify collaborative solutions to wildlife corridor and habitat conservation across land ownerships.” The policy resolution calls on federal agencies to support locally-developed initiatives to conserve fish and wildlife migration corridors and habitat; substantively consult with the Governors and state agencies on land management for migration corridors or habitat; and consider additional means of funding state-led corridor conservation efforts. The Governors “commend the considerable efforts already underway to increase coordination between state fish and wildlife agencies and state departments of transportation to integrate consideration of wildlife corridors and habitat connectivity into transportation infrastructure planning and development...and support development of best

practices to expand state agency coordination.” Moreover, the resolution urges Congress and the Administration to “support collaborative and locally developed initiatives through financial and technical assistance.”

[WGA Policy Resolution 2019-08: Wildlife Migration Corridors and Habitat](#)

- **New England Governors and Eastern Canadian Premiers Resolution 40-3: Resolution on Ecological Connectivity, Adaptation to Climate Change, and Biodiversity Conservation** (August 29, 2016); In this far-reaching resolution, the New England Governors and Eastern Canadian Premiers (NEG/ECP) “instruct agencies within their jurisdictions to elevate ecological connectivity, conservation and restoration in their activities.” Further, “[t]hese agencies are...instructed to encourage regional collaboration, as appropriate, in order to identify priority connectivity zones and expand existing protected areas....” The resolution identifies land protection, land planning transportation enhancement, and the sustainable management of land and aquatic systems “in order to maintain and improve connectivity” as areas for agency cooperation. The resolution further encourages “land planning entities at all levels, especially municipalities, to incorporate habitat connectivity objectives in land use planning and policies.” In addition, the NEG/ECP “direct officials to collaborate, where possible, to document the current state of forest and habitat connectedness in individual jurisdictions and the region...[and] to develop regional work plans to identify address potential issues and collaborative solutions.”

[NEG/ECP Policy Resolution 40-3: Ecological Connectivity, Adaptation to Climate Change, and Biodiversity Conservation](#)

- **Conservation Reserve Program of the Agricultural Improvement Act of 2018, Public Law No. 115-334** (December 20, 2018); *signed by President Donald Trump*. Under the Agricultural Improvement Act of 2018, the Conservation Reserve Program provides federal funding for the Secretary of Agriculture to prioritize lands “of ecological significance, including land that...may assist in the restoration of threatened or endangered species under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, may assist in preventing a species from being listed as a threatened or endangered species under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, or improves or creates wildlife habitat corridors.”

[U.S. Public Law No. 115-334: Agricultural Improvement Act of 2018](#)

- **Department of the Interior Secretarial Order (SO) 3362: Improving Habitat Quality in Western Big-Game Winter Range and Migration Corridors** (February 9, 2019); *signed by Secretary Ryan Zinke*. SO 3362 directs appropriate agencies within the Department of the Interior (DOI), which include the Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service, and U.S. Geological Survey, to “work in close partnership with the states of Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington and Wyoming to enhance and improve the quality of big-game winter range and migration corridor habitat on Federal lands....” The DOI agencies are to “[a]ssess State wildlife agency data regarding wildlife migrations early in the planning process for land use plans and significant project-level actions that bureaus develop,” and to “[e]valuate and appropriately apply site-specific management activities, as identified in State land use plans, [or] site-specific plans...that conserve or restore

habitat necessary to sustain local and regional big-game populations.” The order describes “minimizing development that would fragment winter range and primary migration corridors,” as one of several potential measures to conserve or restore habitat.

[D.O.I. SO 3362: Improving Habitat Quality in Western Big Game Winter Range and Migration Corridors](#)

- **Native American Fish and Wildlife Society Resolution 19-002: Support for the Protection of Wildlife Corridors (May 23, 2019); signed by NAFWS President David Reiter.** The resolution supports the Wildlife Corridors Conservation Act and “the inclusion of Tribes in such legislation and that it provides resources to assist Tribes with their wildlife and habitat connectivity efforts on tribal lands.” It further calls upon the “Interior Department to make Secretarial Order 3362 [see prior entry] inclusive of the nation’s federally-recognized tribes.” Finally, the resolution supports “collaborative efforts amongst tribal, state, federal and private land managers to protect wildlife corridors and other habitat connectivity needs across large landscapes on and off tribal lands.”

[Native American FWS Resolution 19-002: Support for the Protection of Wildlife Corridors](#)



NEW STATE POLICIES, 2016-2019

- **Wyoming Game and Fish Department Ungulate Migration Corridor Strategy** (Adopted February 4, 2016; revised January 28, 2019); *signed by Game and Fish Commission President Charles Price.* Under this strategy, the Wyoming Game and Fish Commission designates “ungulate migration

bottlenecks and ungulate stopover areas as ‘Vital’ under the Commission’s Mitigation Policy...” Accordingly, “The Department is directed by the Commission to recommend no significant declines in species distribution or abundance or loss of habitat function. Some modification of habitat characteristics may occur, provided habitat function is maintained.”

In order to realize the strategy, “[t]he Department...designate[s] Ungulate Migration Corridors in accordance with the Department’s Standardized Definitions for Seasonal Wildlife Ranges.” Further, “[t]he Department...work[s] cooperatively with stakeholders to identify related research and proactive conservation actions (e.g., conservation easements; fence modifications; habitat improvement projects) to conserve migration corridors.”

[WY Game and Fish Ungulate Migration Corridor Strategy](#)

- **Vermont: Act 171:** An Act Relating to Timber Harvesting (June 7, 2016); signed by Governor Pete Shumlin. Among provisions that recognize the economic and ecosystem function value of the public and private forests of Vermont, this act sets up a 9-member Committee to “study potential revisions to...[Vermont Planning Statutes] to protect contiguous areas of forestland from fragmentation and promote habitat connectivity between forestlands,” and to prepare “the revisions the Committee suggests be made.” As a result, each of the state’s 11 Regional Plans, as well as those of municipalities, are to include a land use element that indicates “areas that are important as forest blocks and habitat connectors and plans for land development in those areas to minimize forest fragmentation and promote the health, viability, and ecological function of forests.”

The act defines a habitat connector as “land or water, or both, that links patches of wildlife habitat within a landscape, allowing the movement, migration, and dispersal of animals and plants and the functioning of ecological processes.”

[VT Act 171: An Act Relating to Timber Harvesting](#)

[VT Agency for Natural Resources Act 171 Guidance](#)

- **New Hampshire: SB 376: An Act Relative to Wildlife Corridors** (August 9, 2016); *signed by Governor Maggie Hassan*. The act recognizes “as a public good that habitat connectivity, including wildlife corridors and habitat linkages, be maintained and expanded.” It further provides a 2-year window for the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department to work in collaboration with the Department of Environmental Services, and Department of Transportation to prepare a report that “shall identify existing and needed wildlife corridors, including riparian corridors, and including potential crossings of transportation arteries.” Further, the agencies are to research voluntary mechanisms and provide recommendations to maintain corridors.

[NH SB 376: An Act Relative to Wildlife Corridors](#)

- **California: AB 2087: Regional Conservation Investment Strategies** (September 22, 2016); *signed by Governor Jerry Brown*. The act creates the state’s Regional Conservation Investment Strategy (RCIS) Program “to inform science-based nonbinding and voluntary conservation actions and

habitat enhancement actions that would advance the conservation of focal species, including the ecological processes, natural communities, and habitat connectivity upon which those focal species depend.” A RCIS assessment can be created by any public agency to establish species-level biological goals, objectives and actions, such as land protection, habitat restoration, installation of wildlife crossings, or fish passage barrier removal. Once approved by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, a RCIS can serve as the basis for a Mitigation Credit Agreement, under which additional entities can gain transferrable mitigation credits based on implementation of conservation or habitat enhancement actions.

[CA Regional Conservation Investment Strategies Program](#)

- **Vermont: Act 47. An Act Relating to the Commission on Act 250: The Next 50 Years** (May 23, 2017); *signed by Governor Phil Scott*. The act sets up a 6-member legislative commission and group of citizen advisors to examine and report upon the state’s 1970’s land use and development law, “with the objective of ensuring that, over the next 50 years, Act 250 supports Vermont’s economic, environmental, and land use planning goals.” Among items required in the review are “[a]n examination of the criteria and jurisdiction of Act 250” to include “[w]hether the criteria support development in areas designated...and preserve rural areas, farms, and forests outside those areas,” and “[w]hether the criteria support natural resources, working lands, farms, agricultural soils, and forests in a healthy ecosystem protected from fragmentation and loss of wildlife corridors.”

In 1970, Act 250: An Act to Create an Environmental Board and District Environmental Commissions (signed by Governor Deane C. Davis), the General Assembly determined that “a comprehensive state capability and development plan and land use plan are necessary to provide guidelines for utilization of the lands and environment of the state of Vermont and to define the goals to be achieved through land environmental use, planning and control.”

[VT Act 47 \(2017\): An Act Relating to the Commission on Act 250: The Next 50 Years](#)

[VT Act 250 \(1970\); codified at 10 V.S.A. Chapter 151: State Land Use and Development Plans](#)

- **Wyoming: HB 39: Wildlife Conservation License Plates** (March 13, 2018); *signed by Governor Matt Mead*. The act establishes a wildlife conservation license plate, annual fee, and specific account for the proceeds raised in order to fund “wildlife conservation efforts related to the transportation system, including signage, wildlife corridors, wildlife crossings and game fences.”

[WY HB 39: Wildlife Conservation License Plates](#)

- **New Mexico: SB 228: Wildlife Corridors Act** (March 28, 2019); *signed by Governor Michelle Grisham*. The act requires “the department of game and fish, in coordination with the department of transportation...create a state ‘wildlife corridors action plan’...[to include]...information about the habitat quality needed to support and maintain viable populations of wildlife.” The initial action plan is to be published by January 15, 2020, for public comment and updated every 10 years or “amended prior to a full update as new research and data become available or changes in conditions affecting wildlife and wildlife-human interactions arise.” The Wildlife Corridors Action Plan is to include “a prioritized ‘wildlife

corridors project list' of projects to be undertaken," ordered by "(1) the potential to reduce wildlife-vehicle collision[s] and enhance safety to the traveling public; (2) the relative current population size of select large mammal species and species of concern or the value of proposed infrastructure that will improve wildlife corridors," and additional attributes. Annual reporting is required to the governor and legislature on "progress toward completion of a project...with a corresponding explanation...and plans for future progress."

[NM SB 228: Wildlife Corridors Act](#)

[NM Action Plan Information](#)

- **Oregon: HB 2834: An Act Relating to Wildlife Corridors** (June 7, 2019); *signed by Governor Kate Brown*. The act recognizes that "biodiversity and habitat connectivity play a vital role in Oregon's economy" and "in addition to other benefits, wildlife corridors provide ecosystem services such as pollination, air and water purification, carbon sequestration and disturbance prevention," such that "formally designating and protecting wildlife corridors is a crucial strategy for bolstering Oregon's ecosystem resiliency and for ensuring the long-term viability of wildlife population[s] and communities."

The act requires the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife to "develop a plan, to be known as the Wildlife Corridor Action Plan, to preserve long-term habitat connectivity for wildlife in Oregon. The plan shall provide guidance for all state agencies to develop benchmarks for the designation and protection of wildlife corridors...." The Plan is to include "[a] list of areas for which designation of wildlife corridors, land acquisition or other agency actions are of high priority to protect wildlife movement or habitat connectivity," and be updated every 5 years. The Department of Transportation is to establish a program in concert with the Plan to reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions where identified corridors "intersect with proposed or existing public roads."

[OR HB 2834: An Act Relating to Wildlife Corridors](#)

- **Oregon Department of Motor Vehicles: Watch for Wildlife License Plate** (July 25, 2019). The Oregon Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) authorized a new Watch for Wildlife license plate to support wildlife crossings and habitat connectivity projects in conjunction with Oregon Wildlife Foundation. In accordance with DMV policy, plates are to be issued once an initial 3000 are pre-ordered, with additional startup costs provided by the Foundation. Funds collected from the plate are to support efforts for safe migration as determined by Foundation.

[OR Department of Fish and Wildlife Watch for Wildlife Press Release](#)

[OR Special Registration Plates Application Guide](#)

- **New Hampshire: SB 200: An Act Relative to Wildlife Corridors** (July 12, 2019); *signed by Governor Chris Sununu*. New Hampshire recognizes "as a public good that habitat connectivity, including wildlife corridors, habitat linkages, and riparian and coastal corridors, be maintained and expanded...[and] encourage[s], wherever feasible and practical, voluntary steps to protect the functioning of wildlife corridors...." The policy enables the use of funds from the New

Hampshire Community Heritage and Investment Program “to obtain interests in lands...adjacent to state highways...[for] protection of wildlife corridors and habitat strongholds” and that “the department of transportation shall consider wildlife corridors and habitat strongholds...in road mitigation projects... [and] incorporate wildlife corridors that intersect transportation infrastructure into project planning and mitigation efforts to minimize the effect of roads on wildlife connectivity....”

[NH SB 200: An Act Relative to Wildlife Corridors](#)

- **Colorado: Conserving Colorado’s Big Game and Migration Corridors Executive Order D-2019-011** (August 21, 2019); *signed by Governor Jared Polis*. The order states: “Simply put, wildlife is essential to Colorado’s outdoor recreation economy and landscape heritage...Intact seasonal habitats, and the migratory routes that connect these habitats, are vital to ensuring that Colorado’s wildlife populations continue to thrive.” The order directs (a) Colorado Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to “identify policy, regulatory, and legislative opportunities to ensure the ongoing conservation of seasonal big game habitat and migration corridors,” including opportunities to “work with neighboring states on cross-boundary migration corridors,” (b) Colorado Parks and Wildlife to work on public outreach and education to implement the order, and (c) Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) to “enable safe wildlife passage and incorporate consideration of big game migration into all levels of its planning process.” It also directs CDOT and DNR to enter into a memorandum of understanding to identify and implement priority areas for big game crossings over and under roadways, using the best available science.

[CO Conserving Colorado’s Big Game and Migration Corridors Executive Order D-2019-011](#)

Wyoming: Greater Sage-Grouse Core Area Protection Executive Order (EO) 2019-3 (August 21, 2019); *signed by Governor Mark Gordon*. *Replaces Executive Orders 2015-4 and 2017-2*. The order updates the State of Wyoming’s Core Area Strategy, initiated in 2008 [see earlier entry, 2008] and subsequently enriched, to “prioritize the maintenance and enhancement of Greater sage-grouse habitats and populations inside Core Population Areas, Connectivity Areas, and Winter Concentration Areas.” The new order requires annual reporting to track progress, and states Wyoming will “seek opportunities to expand populations and habitats for Greater sage-grouse,” where feasible, through voluntary efforts.

[WY Greater Sage-Grouse Core Area Protection Executive Order 2019-3](#)

Wyoming Department of Transportation Operating Policy on Fences and Cattle Guards (September 8, 2019); *signed by Director Luke Reiner*. Under this policy, “[s]tandard fence plans can be modified to accommodate animal migration routes, specific land uses, or other unique situations. On primary and secondary highways, a 42-inch high fence may be allowed in select areas as recommended by the Wyoming Game & Fish Department if the landowner and any lessee involved that may be grazing livestock on adjacent land provide written permission.”

- **Colorado Department of Natural Resources Division of Parks and Wildlife Commission Resolution 19-02 Regarding Support for Governor Polis’s Executive Order D-2019-011: Conserving Colorado’s Big Game Winter Ranges and Migration Corridors** (adopted November 14-15, 2019); *signed by Parks and Wildlife Commission Acting Chair Michelle Zimmerman*. The

resolution affirms “that the Colorado Parks and Wildlife Commission recognizes and appreciates the valuable contributions of Governor Polis’s direction in Executive Order D-2019-011 to work in partnership with the Department of Natural Resources, Colorado Department of Transportation and Colorado Wildlife and Transportation Alliance, to conserve Colorado’s big game winter ranges and migration corridors.” Further, it agrees to “support the funding opportunity from the Department of Interior’s Secretarial Order 2018-3362: Improving Habitat Quality in Western Big Game Winter Ranges and Migration Corridors.”

[CO Division of Parks and Wildlife Commission Resolution 19-02](#)

- **Colorado: Memorandum of Understanding Between the Colorado Department of Transportation and the Colorado Department of Natural Resources Division of Parks and Wildlife** (December 10, 2019); *signed by Department of Transportation Chief Engineer Steve Harelson and Parks and Wildlife Director Dan Prenzl*. Under this memorandum, the agencies agree to cooperate on transportation project planning and implementation to identify priority areas and possible mitigation measures to reduce wildlife-vehicle conflict, and to support a public-private partnership, the Colorado Wildlife and Transportation Alliance, in order to raise awareness and pursue funding opportunities. Specific areas of collaboration identified are: wildlife-vehicle collision identification and mitigation, data access and information sharing, communication and coordination, public and media relations, and training.

[CO Department of Transportation and Division of Parks and Wildlife MOU](#)



INNOVATIVE COUNTY POLICIES, 2016-2019

- **Minnesota: Hennepin County Natural Resources Strategic Plan** (May 24, 2016). Hennepin County, which encompasses Minneapolis along with suburban and rural areas, serves as its own Conservation District. In order to fulfill this responsibility, Hennepin County has a Natural

Resources Strategic Plan, a primary goal of which is to “promote, establish and restore ecologically functional landscapes and control threats to natural resources to promote diverse and sustainable ecosystems throughout the county.” The County has classified each of its acres according to natural and habitat values, “laying the groundwork for long-term protection and restoration of natural areas and important corridors or greenways that facilitate the growth and movement of wildlife and native vegetation between natural areas.” The Plan commits the County to “[i]dentify, protect and restore the best remaining natural areas and corridors.”

[Hennepin County Natural Resources Strategic Plan](#)

- **Montana: Park County Growth Policy Update** (May 1, 2017). Located within the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, Park County, Montana, updated its 2016 Growth Policy to include specific goals, objectives, and actions to promote coexistence with wildlife. The updated Growth Policy directs the planning department to “[i]dentify critical wildlife corridors for development, infrastructure and conservation planning,” and to include this information in the County Atlas. It also encourages the state to maintain wildlife corridors in highway construction.

[Park County Growth Policy](#)

- **Washington: Spokane County Critical Areas Ordinance for the Protection of Wetlands, Fish and Wildlife Habitats, Geo-hazard Areas and Critical Aquifer Recharge Areas** (Amended May 1, 2018; adopted March 26, 1996). The Critical Areas Ordinance of Spokane County in eastern Washington, first adopted in 1996 and most recently updated in 2018, includes designation and protection of fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas and species-specific conservation areas, in accordance with the requirements of the 1990 state Growth Management Act. Recorded priority habitats include wildlife corridors (e.g. “areas used for foraging movements, seasonal migrations or the once in a lifetime dispersal of juvenile animals”), landscape linkages that enable “community or ecosystem processes to operate,” riparian areas, and urban and rural open space that serve as corridors between other priority habitats. Performance standards are specified for regulated uses in these areas. Incentives such as property tax relief, on-site density transfers and off-site transfers of development rights facilitate conservation goals while protecting property rights.

[Spokane County Critical Areas Ordinance](#)

[Washington State Growth Management Act Overview, Critical Areas Handbook, and Ordinance Examples from Multiple Counties](#)

- **California: Ventura County Ordinance No. 4537: An Ordinance of the County of Ventura, State of California, Amending Division 8, Chapter 1, Articles 2, 3, 4, 5 and 9 of the Ventura County Ordinance Code, Non-Coastal Zoning Ordinance to Regulate Development within the Habitat Connectivity and Wildlife Corridors and the Critical Wildlife Passage Overlay Zones** (March 12, 2019). **Ventura County Ordinance No. 4539: An Ordinance of the County of Ventura, State of California, Amending Division 8, Chapter 1, Article 18 of the Ventura County Ordinance Code, Non-Coastal Zoning Ordinance to Amend the Zoning Classifications of Lots to Indicate their Inclusion within the Newly-Established Habitat Connectivity and Wildlife Corridors Overlay Zone and/or Critical Wildlife Passage Areas Overlay Zone** (March 12, 2019). California’s

Ventura County passed Ordinances 4537 and 4539 to amend its Non-Coastal Zoning Code in order to “Regulate Development Within the Habitat Connectivity and Wildlife Corridors and the Critical Wildlife Passage Areas Overlay Zones.” Together, the goal of these ordinances is “to preserve functional connectivity for wildlife and vegetation throughout the overlay zone by minimizing direct and indirect barriers, minimizing loss of vegetation and habitat fragmentation and minimizing impacts to those areas that are narrow, impacted or otherwise tenuous with respect to wildlife movement.” The ordinances regulate outdoor lighting, require setbacks from surface water and known wildlife crossings, limit installation of wildlife impermeable fencing, and prohibit planting of invasive species.

[Ventura County Habitat Connectivity and Wildlife Corridor Ordinances \(Ord. 4537 & Ord. 4539\)](#)

- **Montana: Missoula Area Land Use Element** (June 6, 2019). Missoula County in western Montana adopted a Missoula Area Land Use Element as an amendment to its 2016 Growth Policy. A component of the Element’s vision is, “Preserve Working Lands, Agricultural Areas, and Naturally-Functioning Systems.” This component describes a role of the county as “protection of...important habitats,” including “geographic funnels and terrain features (e.g., riparian corridors, ridgelines, timbered draws, passes) that naturally guide wildlife to certain areas in harsh weather conditions and during seasonal movements and migrations.” The Element also describes the need to update the zoning map and regulations to reflect 15 land use designations, including “open, resource and recreation.”

[Missoula Area Land Use Element](#)

- **New Mexico: Santa Fe Resolution No. 2019-92** (July 9, 2019), **San Miguel Resolution No. 201902154** (July 9, 2019), **Rio Arriba Resolution No. 2020-06** (July 30, 2019), **Taos County Resolution No. 2019-39** (August 20, 2019), **Colfax County No. 2109-28** (September 9, 2019) and **Mora County No. 2019-056** (October 23, 2019): **A Resolution in Support of Protecting Wildlife Corridors in the Upper Rio Grande Basin**. These six northern New Mexico counties passed similar resolutions that include formal support for the U.S. Congress to pass the Wildlife Corridors Conservation Act – introduced in Congress in May 2019 – and also to encourage regional National Forests (Carson, Santa Fe and Rio Grande) to establish special management areas for wildlife habitat connectivity. The policies uniformly recognize that wildlife resources are “fundamental” to the “history, culture and identity” of each county and describe “the need and opportunity to foster increased collaboration among state, federal and tribal natural resource managers to promote and protect landscape connectivity.”

[Santa Fe County Resolution Number 2019-92](#)

ADDENDUM: STATE AND COUNTY GUIDELINES AND MASTER PLANS FOR WILDLIFE CROSSINGS, 2016-2019

1.1 STATE GUIDELINES, 2016-2019

- **Florida: Department of Transportation Wildlife Crossings Guidelines** (2016; updated in 2018). The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) developed Wildlife Crossings Guidelines in coordination with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission to “evaluate the appropriateness of including wildlife crossings (upland or wetland) and associated features,” in new projects and highway retrofits. The Guidelines outline considerations for agency staff, local governments, non-profits, and the public to recommend wildlife crossings and provide information about the research, evidentiary, and funding needs for their implementation. The document is described as a “guide for coordination, consultation and decision making.”

[FL Department of Transportation Wildlife Crossings Guidelines](#)

- **Florida: Department of Transportation Plans Preparation Manual** (January 1, 2017). Under its revised Plans Preparation Manual, the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) requires consideration of wildlife connectivity in new bridge design, whether for minor grade separations, small water crossings, major bridges or interchanges. Evaluation of wildlife connectivity needs begins in the initial phase of project evaluation, and “[w]ildlife connectivity features include new or modified structures; e.g. bridges, bridges with shelves, specially designed culverts, enlarged culverts or drainage culverts. Exclusionary devices such as fencing, walls or other barriers may be included to funnel wildlife to a crossing.” The Manual includes multiple references to wildlife connectivity considerations and also refers users to the FDOT Wildlife Crossing Guidelines [see 2016 entry, below].

[FL Department of Transportation Plans Preparation Manual](#)

1.2 COUNTY WILDLIFE CROSSING PLANS, 2018-2019

- **Wyoming: Teton County Wildlife Crossing Master Plan** (June 19, 2018). Teton County, Wyoming adopted a county-wide, Wildlife Crossings Master Plan under the direction of a 2015 Teton County Integrated Transportation Plan, which required a plan to “enhance wildlife permeability and reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions.” As adopted, the Wildlife Crossing Master Plan is “aimed at reducing wildlife-vehicle collisions with large mammals, providing safe crossing opportunities for large mammals, and making stream crossings passable for fish species.” The Plan identifies wildlife-vehicle collision hot spots and mitigation options. Prepared by the Western Transportation Institute at Montana State University in consultation with the county and other interested stakeholders, the Plan’s recommendations result from cost-benefit analyses, prioritization, and investigation of wildlife-vehicle collision mitigation methods of various types, including underpasses, overpasses, at-grade crossings, fencing, lighting, and speed limits.

[Teton County Wildlife Crossing Master Plan](#)

- **Colorado: Eagle County Safe Passages for Wildlife Final Report** (December 4, 2018). Eagle County, Colorado, adopted a Safe Passages for Wildlife report as a Special Master Plan. First, the County carried out a habitat linkage analysis and stakeholder meetings to gain “a standardized framework for initial identification and delineation of habitat linkages across roadways for select focal species,” as detailed in *Eagle County Wildlife Connectivity Assessment: Phase I, Identification of Habitat Linkages Across Major Highways*. The Final Report builds upon Phase I “by integrating additional data sources and broadening stakeholder engagement to refine and prioritize wildlife-highway crossing zones and to develop more specific recommendations for improving or restoring safe passages for wildlife across Eagle County’s major roads and in the adjacent landscape.”

[Eagle County Safe Passages for Wildlife Final Report](#)

- **Colorado: Summit County: Resolution 2019-75: A Resolution Endorsing the Summit County Safe Passages Plan** (October 22, 2019). Summit County, Colorado, formally endorsed a county-wide Safe Passages Plan in 2019, stating “[i]mplementing mitigation recommendations from the Summit County Safe Passages Plan will set the example for communities state and nationwide to work together and provide for the needs of both people and wildlife.” The Summit County Safe Passages Plan was developed under the auspices of a coalition of local governments, state and federal agencies, and non-profit organizations in 2017.

[Summit County Safe Passages Coalition](#)

[Summit County Safe Passages for Wildlife: A County-Wide Connectivity Plan](#)

