



*Mule deer in WY's Red Desert to Hoback Mule Deer Migration Corridor. Photo courtesy of Shane Moore*

## **Background of Wildlife Corridors Conservation Act**

America's native fish, wildlife, and plant species are part of our rich natural and national heritage. Species population numbers have been declining as a result of habitat loss, fragmentation, and degradation. Maintaining habitat connectivity promotes species diversity and lowers the risk of extinction. Wildlife corridors and other habitat improvement efforts may be the strongest tool for protecting wildlife migration routes and, thus, species populations. This Act adopts a collaborative, science- and data-driven approach to establish, maintain and protect wildlife corridors.

States, Tribes, and regional partners have demonstrated great success in protecting America's most iconic species, including the pronghorn, monarch butterfly, and Louisiana black bear, through the establishment of wildlife corridors. For example, the Conference of New England Governors and Eastern Canadian Premiers each addressed species protection through the passage of policy resolutions recognizing the value of wildlife corridors. Both New Hampshire and New Mexico have passed their own wildlife corridor legislation, and at least 5 other U.S. states are considering legislation to establish wildlife crossings and corridors. The Federal Government has likewise moved to coordinate the states, Indian Tribes, and private landowners to improve habitat and migration corridors for antelopes, elk and mule deer. On February 9, 2018, Secretary Zinke issued Secretarial Order 3362 to conserve and improve the quality of Western big-game migration corridors and winter range. This bill aims to build on these previous initiatives and provide a robust framework to address the long-term habitat connectivity of native species.



*Mule deer standing near WY's Jonah Energy gas complex. Nearly 1 and 5 BLM issued oil and gas leases have occurred in areas identified by states as important migration corridors or wintering grounds for big game<sup>1</sup>. Photo courtesy of Shane Moore.*

The Wildlife Corridors Conservation Act provides a framework to address the long-term habitat connectivity of native species. This bill enhances federal data collection, improves stakeholder engagement across multiple jurisdictions, and directs interagency coordination to maintain natural wildlife movement processes and connectivity on public lands. The bill gives authority to key federal agencies to designate National Wildlife Corridors on federal lands. The bill also promotes public safety and protects species where corridors cross infrastructure. This bill is a critical step forward in protecting our nation's lands and waters and in restoring fish, wildlife, and plant populations to conserve biodiversity for future generations.

# Wildlife Corridors Conservation Act of 2019

## Summary of Wildlife Corridors Conservation Act

- The **Wildlife Corridors Conservation Act** ensures native wildlife, including fish, animals, and plants, can continue to migrate, adapt, and thrive in the face of increasing threats to their populations and habitats by facilitating the designation of **National Wildlife Corridors** on federal lands. These corridors would mitigate harm to wildlife and threats to public safety by implementing strategies to reduce public and wildlife conflict.
- The bill establishes a **Wildlife Movement Grant Program** to fund conservation efforts and improvement projects on state and tribal lands, and those of voluntary private landowners, to encourage natural wildlife movements.
- The bill establishes **Regional Wildlife Movement Councils** composed of state agencies, voluntary private landowners, tribes, and other stakeholders to both identify and rank regional priority projects where Grant Program funding would benefit wildlife movements and conservation projects of voluntary parties.
- The bill establishes the **National Coordination Committee** to develop regional wildlife movement plans to allow for better cross-regional collaboration and to recommend guidelines and fund priority projects for the Wildlife Movement Grant Program.
- This bill establishes the **Wildlife Corridors Stewardship Fund** composed of donations that will financially assist the management and protection of National Wildlife Corridors on federal lands.
- The bill creates a collaboratively developed **Wildlife Connectivity Database** to inform wildlife connectivity decisions across the United States using evidence-based approaches from data collected on federal land by federal agents.
- The bill establishes a **Tribal Wildlife Corridor** initiative to encourage Indian tribes to utilize and expand wildlife corridors on Indian lands.

## Wildlife Corridors: Myth v. Fact

- **Does** allow States the opportunity to identify and recommend species-specific priority habitats for National Wildlife Corridors designations on federal lands.
- **Does** promote public safety and protects species where wildlife crossings intersect with dangerous transportation infrastructure.
- **Does not** direct any state, tribal, or private landowner to take action. Instead, this bill gives incentives through the Wildlife Movement Grant Program to states, tribes, and voluntary private landowners to make improvements to aid wildlife movements.
- **Does not** designate any non-federal land and water as a wildlife corridor.
- **Does not** affect State and Tribe jurisdiction over fish and wildlife management.



*Mule deer casualty due to fencing that impeded natural movement across habitat landscape. Photo courtesy of Shane Moore.*