

Wildlife Corridors Conservation Act of 2018 (S.3715)

Sponsors: Senator Tom Udall (D-N.M.) and Representative Don Beyer (D-Va.)

Background of Wildlife Corridors Conservation Act

America's native fish, wildlife, and plant species are part of our rich natural and national heritage. Scientists recognize that species have been declining as a result of habitat loss, fragmentation, and degradation. Data shows that maintaining habitat connectivity supports higher species diversity and lowers their risk of extinction. Wildlife corridors, road crossings, and other habitat connectivity efforts may be the strongest tool for protecting wildlife migration routes and habitats. To address these challenges, a holistic, science-driven and landscape-level approach is required to both protect and manage ecosystems to ensure connectivity between remaining habitats.

State and regional partners have already demonstrated great success through the establishment of corridors to protect America's most iconic wildlife from pronghorn to monarch butterflies to the Louisiana black bear. This bill builds on the collaborative work between federal, state, tribal and local governments, private landowners and NGOs. These stakeholders shared data and information to improve land management decisions in order to grow our economy and protect iconic species. The Western Governors Association and the Conference of New England Governors and Eastern Canadian Premiers each addressed species protection through the passage of policy resolutions that recognize the importance of corridor protection and habitat connectivity. On February 9, 2018, Secretary Zinke issued a Secretarial Order to conserve and improve the quality of Western big-game migration corridors and winter range. This bill aims to build on these previous initiatives to provide a robust framework to address the long-term habitat connectivity of native species.

Summary of Wildlife Corridors Conservation Act

- The Wildlife Corridors Conservation Act aims to ensure wildlife can continue to migrate, move, and thrive in the face of increasing threats to their populations and habitats by establishing the **National Wildlife Corridors Program**.
- The bill creates a collaboratively developed **Wildlife Connectivity Database** that will include standardized, quality data to support decision-makers by collecting and disseminating information to states, tribes, and federal agencies. The database will be used to inform wildlife connectivity decisions across the United States.
- The bill grants authority to key federal agencies to designate **National Wildlife Corridors** to support connectivity, resilience, and adaptability of native fish, wildlife, and plant species on public lands.
- The bill creates a **Wildlife Movement Grant Program** that will fund priority projects on state, private, and tribal lands that have been recommended by the Regional Wildlife Movement Councils.
- The bill establishes **Regional Wildlife Movement Councils** that will develop Regional Wildlife Movement Plans, identifying priority areas on non-federal lands where resources are needed to secure biological movements, and solicit and recommend projects for funding by the National Coordination Committee.
- The bill establishes the **National Coordination Committee** to develop a national plan for Wildlife Movement, recommend guidelines and projects for the Wildlife Movement Grant Program, and facilitate collaboration between the National Wildlife Corridors on public lands, and the Regional Wildlife Movement Councils on state, private, and tribal lands.
- The bill directs the Secretary of the Interior, in consultation with other federal agencies, states, Tribes, local governments, private landowners, and interested stakeholders to develop a federal strategy to effectively manage the **National Wildlife Corridors System**.
- This bill establishes the **Wildlife Corridors Stewardship and Protection Fund** to support the management and protection of Corridors and other lands and waters important to species connectivity.