

Amendment Offered by Rep. Gabe Vasquez (NM-02)Amendment Description:

This amendment would codify the Migratory Big Game Initiative model to enable USDA to pair the benefits of Grassland Conservation Reserve Program and Environmental Quality Incentives Program together, encourage USDA research on virtual fencing, designate wildlife habitat connectivity as a critical conservation area under RCPP, and enhance EQIP incentives for conservation practices that support habitat connectivity.

AMENDMENT TO _____
OFFERED BY MR. VASQUEZ OF NEW MEXICO

Add at the end of section 10102 the following:

1 (e) HABITAT CONNECTIVITY ON WORKING LANDS.—

2 (1) DEFINITIONS.—Section 1240A of the Food
3 Security Act of 1985 (16 U.S.C. 3839aa–1) is
4 amended by adding at the end the following:

5 “(11) HABITAT CONNECTIVITY.—The term
6 ‘habitat connectivity’ means the degree to which
7 landscape or habitat elements facilitate native
8 species movement among seasonal habitats.

9 “(12) BIG GAME SPECIES.—The term ‘big
10 game species’ means native species of large
11 mammals including, wild deer, elk, pronghorn,
12 wild sheep, and moose.”.

13 (2) REGIONAL CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP
14 PROGRAM CRITICAL CONSERVATION AREAS.—Section
15 1271F(a)(2)(C) of the Food Security Act of 1985
16 (16 U.S.C. 3871f(a)(2)(C)) is amended by inserting
17 “, including restoration and enhancement of wildlife
18 habitat connectivity and wildlife migration corridors,
19 with a focus on big game species” before “; and”.

1 (3) ENROLLMENT IN THE ENVIRONMENTAL
2 QUALITY INCENTIVES PROGRAM AND THE CON-
3 SERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM OF GRASSLAND
4 ENROLLED IN THE CONSERVATION RESERVE PRO-
5 GRAM.—

6 (A) ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY INCEN-
7 TIVES PROGRAM.—Section 1240B(d) of the
8 Food Security Act of 1985 (16 U.S.C. 3839aa-
9 2(d)) is amended—

10 (i) in paragraph (6), by striking “A
11 producer” and inserting “Except as pro-
12 vided in paragraph (8), a producer”; and

13 (ii) by adding at the end the fol-
14 lowing:

15 “(8) COST-SHARE PAYMENTS FOR GRASSLAND
16 ENROLLED IN THE CONSERVATION RESERVE PRO-
17 GRAM.—

18 “(A) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary may
19 provide payments under the program for costs
20 associated with planning, design, materials,
21 equipment, installation, labor, management,
22 maintenance, or training with respect to eligible
23 land that is—

1 “(i) enrolled in the conservation re-
2 serve program under section
3 1231(d)(2)(A); and

4 “(ii) of ecological significance, as de-
5 scribed in section 1231(d)(2)(B)(iii).

6 “(B) LIMITATION.—A producer shall not
7 be eligible for payments under subparagraph
8 (A) for practices if the producer receives pay-
9 ments or other benefits for the same practice on
10 the same land under another Federal program
11 (other than the conservation reserve program
12 under subchapter B of chapter 1).”.

13 (B) CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PRO-
14 GRAM.—Section 1240J(b) of the Food Security
15 Act of 1985 (16 U.S.C. 3839aa–22(b)) is
16 amended—

17 (i) in paragraph (1), in the matter
18 preceding subparagraph (A), by inserting
19 “and except as provided in paragraph (3),”
20 after “paragraph (2),”; and

21 (ii) by adding at the end the fol-
22 lowing:

23 “(3) COST-SHARE PAYMENTS FOR GRASSLAND
24 ENROLLED IN THE CONSERVATION RESERVE PRO-
25 GRAM.—

1 “(A) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary may
2 provide payments under the program for costs
3 associated with planning, design, materials,
4 equipment, installation, labor, management,
5 maintenance, or training with respect to eligible
6 land that is—

7 “(i) enrolled in the conservation re-
8 serve program under section
9 1231(d)(2)(A); and

10 “(ii) of ecological significance, as de-
11 scribed in section 1231(d)(2)(B)(iii).

12 “(B) LIMITATION.—A producer shall not
13 be eligible for payments under subparagraph
14 (A) for conservation activities if the producer
15 receives payments or other benefits for the
16 same conservation activities on the same land
17 under another Federal program (other than the
18 conservation reserve program under subchapter
19 B of chapter 1).

20 “(C) EMERGENCY GRAZING AND HAYING
21 ACCESS PRESERVED.—No priority resource con-
22 cern, practice, or incentive pertaining to res-
23 toration and enhancement of wildlife habitat
24 connectivity and wildlife migration corridors on
25 the acres described above will prevent or alter

1 emergency grazing and haying access for grass-
2 land acres enrolled in the conservation reserve
3 program.”.

4 (C) PAYMENT LIMITATION FOR RENTAL
5 PAYMENTS UNDER THE CONSERVATION RE-
6 SERVE PROGRAM.—Section 1234(g)(1) of the
7 Food Security Act of 1985 (16 U.S.C.
8 3834(g)(1)) is amended by striking “\$50,000”
9 and inserting “\$125,000”.

10 (4) INCREASED PAYMENTS UNDER THE ENVI-
11 RONMENTAL QUALITY INCENTIVES PROGRAM.—Sec-
12 tion 1240B(d) of the Food Security Act of 1985 (16
13 U.S.C. 3839aa–2(d)) is amended—

14 (A) in paragraph (3)(F), by inserting “and
15 wildlife habitat connectivity” before “; or”; and

16 (B) in paragraph (7)(A)—

17 (i) in clause (iii), by striking “or” at
18 the end;

19 (ii) in clause (iv), by striking the pe-
20 riod at the end and inserting “; or”; and

21 (iii) by adding at the end the fol-
22 lowing:

23 “(v) addresses the conservation and
24 restoration of wildlife habitat, including

1 wildlife habitat connectivity and wildlife
2 migration corridors.”.

3 (5) CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARDS.—
4 Section 1242 of the Food Security Act of 1985 (16
5 U.S.C. 3842) is amended by adding at the end the
6 following:

7 “(j) ADDRESSING BARRIERS TO HABITAT
8 CONNECTIVITY.—

9 “(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall—

10 “(A) to the maximum extent practicable,
11 fully incorporate nonstructural methods to con-
12 trol livestock distribution, such as virtual fenc-
13 ing, into the conservation practice standards;
14 and

15 “(B) provide for the appropriate range of
16 conservation practices and resource mitigation
17 measures available to landowners using non-
18 structural methods described in subparagraph
19 (A).

20 “(2) AVAILABILITY OF ADEQUATE TECHNICAL
21 ASSISTANCE.—The Secretary shall ensure that ade-
22 quate technical assistance is available for the imple-
23 mentation of—

24 “(A) nonstructural methods described in
25 paragraph (1)(A); and

1 “(B) other practices that support habitat
2 connectivity (as that term is defined in section
3 1240A) through Federal conservation pro-
4 grams.”.

5 (6) ADMINISTRATIVE REQUIREMENTS FOR CON-
6 SERVATION PROGRAMS.—Section 1244 of the Food
7 Security Act of 1985 (16 U.S.C. 3844) is amended
8 by adding at the end the following:

9 “(q) ENCOURAGEMENT OF HABITAT CONNECTIVITY
10 AND BIG GAME CORRIDORS.—In carrying out any con-
11 servation program administered by the Secretary, the Sec-
12 retary may, as appropriate, encourage—

13 “(1) the conservation of landscape corridors
14 and hydrologic connectivity, where native big game
15 species (as that term is defined in section 1240A)
16 and ecological processes can transition from one
17 habitat to another, in order to conserve native bio-
18 diversity and ensure resiliency against impacts from
19 a range of stressors; and

20 “(2) the use of conservation practices that sup-
21 port the development, restoration, and maintenance
22 of landscape corridors and hydrologic connectivity.”.

23 (7) HIGH-PRIORITY RESEARCH AND EXTENSION
24 AREAS.—Section 1672(d) of the Food, Agriculture,
25 Conservation, and Trade Act of 1990 (7 U.S.C.

1 5925(d)) is amended by adding at the end the fol-
2 lowing:

3 “(21) VIRTUAL FENCING.—Research and exten-
4 sion grants may be made under this section for the
5 purposes of—

6 “(A) understanding and addressing the
7 barriers to the adoption of virtual fencing tech-
8 nology; and

9 “(B) studying the effects of virtual fencing
10 technology on natural and cultural resources,
11 such as—

12 “(i) sensitive riparian areas; and

13 “(ii) crucial winter range and stopover
14 habitats for native big game species (as
15 that term is defined in section 1240A of
16 the Food Security Act of 1985 (16 U.S.C.
17 3839aa–1)).”.

