



May 24, 2019

The Honorable John Barrasso, MD
Chairman
Committee on Environment and Public Works
United States Senate
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Thomas R. Carper
Ranking Member
Committee on Environment and Public Works
United States Senate
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Raul Grijalva
Chairman
Committee on Natural Resources
United States House of Representatives
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rob Bishop
Ranking Member
Committee on Natural Resources
United States House of Representatives
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Barrasso, Chairman Grijalva, Ranking Member Carper, and Ranking Member Bishop:

The Public Lands Council (PLC), the National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA), and the American Sheep Industry Association (ASI) are strongly opposed to H.R. 2795 and S. 1499, which would establish a system of National Wildlife Corridors. PLC is the only national organization dedicated solely to representing the roughly 22,000 ranchers who hold federal grazing permits and operate on federal lands. NCBA is the beef industry's oldest and largest national marketing and trade association representing American cattlemen and women who provide much of the nation's supply of food and own or manage a large portion of America's private property. ASI is the national trade organization representing the interests of over 90,000 sheep ranchers located throughout the country who produce America's lamb and wool.

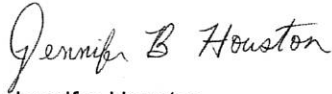
This legislation is an alarming usurpation of state authority and would add yet another layer to the already complex federal land management bureaucracy. State wildlife management agencies maintain primary management jurisdiction over species which are not listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA)—the majority of the species in question. These state agencies already have the authority to designate wildlife corridors, and it is standing policy at the federal land management agencies to aid them in those pursuits wherever possible. Secretarial Order 3362, signed by Secretary Zinke last year, affirms the Interior Department's commitment to that end. While we have our concerns certain aspects of the Order, we feel it is a far more appropriate federal response to the wildlife corridor issue than these bills.

We must emphasize that ranchers recognize wildlife migration is critical to their survival, and we are eager partners in the effort to preserve corridors for the benefit of native fauna. Ranches, particularly in the West, are by nature havens for a myriad of wildlife species. However, when burdensome regulations force ranchers out of business, these unbroken, well-maintained landscapes are often parceled off into small-acre developments, greatly impeding the movement of migratory wildlife. It is critical that any federal corridor policy, whether crafted legislatively or administratively, not accentuate the problem by placing undue restrictions on those enterprises which inherently provide vital habitat and migration routes.

Local agencies are better suited to react to changing conditions and apply historical knowledge in decision making. Congress must allow the states to manage their public resources using the best science and data acquired on the ground. This legislation, however well intended, would hinder this work and greatly undercut those governments already engaged in this effort.

PLC, NCBA, and ASI appreciate the opportunity to provide our input on behalf of our members – the nation's food and fiber producers. We urge your firm opposition to H.R. 2795 and S. 1499.

Sincerely,



Jennifer Houston
President
National Cattlemen's Beef Assn.



Bob Skinner
President
Public Lands Council



Benny Cox
President
American Sheep Industry Assn.

CC:

The Honorable Collin Peterson, Chairman, House Agriculture

The Honorable Mike Conaway, Ranking Member, House Agriculture

The Honorable Peter DeFazio, Chairman, House Transportation & Infrastructure

The Honorable Sam Graves, Ranking Member, House Transportation & Infrastructure

The Honorable Grace Napolitano, Chair, Subcommittee on Water Resources & Environment

The Honorable Bruce Westerman, Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Water Resources & Environment