



October 17, 2019

Chairman Jared Huffman
House Natural Resources, Subcommittee on
Waters, Oceans, and Wildlife
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Ranking Member Tom McClintock
House Natural Resources, Subcommittee on
Waters, Oceans, and Wildlife
U.S. House of Representatives
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Dear Chairman Huffman, Ranking Member McClintock, and Members of the Subcommittee:

On behalf of more than one million of our members and supporters, The Wilderness Society (TWS) writes to express support for H.R. 2795, the Wildlife Corridors Conservation Act of 2019 being heard in the Subcommittee on Waters, Oceans, and Wildlife on October 17th, 2019.

H.R. 2795, Wildlife Corridors Conservation Act of 2019

TWS supports H.R. 2795, the Wildlife Corridors Conservation Act of 2019, sponsored by Representative Beyer and Representative Buchanan. H.R. 2795 would mitigate connectivity issues by establishing a National Wildlife Corridors Program and help protect and restore America's native wildlife and support more resilient landscapes.

Just as people need roads and highways to travel from one place to another, fish, wildlife, and even plants need space between habitats to move, particularly in the face of a changing climate. These natural corridors are vital to the migration, dispersal, genetic exchange, and climate adaptation of practically all species. While extinction is a natural phenomenon, scientists estimate that we are currently losing animal and plant species at 1,000 times higher than the natural "background" rate of one to five species a year, largely as a result of habitat loss, degradation, and fragmentation.¹ Studies have shown that intact wildlife corridors can increase movement between habitat patches by approximately 50 percent compared to patches not connected by corridors, contributing to the conservation of native biodiversity and bolstering defenses against the growing impacts of climate change.²

H.R. 2795 that would establish a National Wildlife Corridors Program that would enable the designation of National Wildlife Corridors on federal public lands as well as funding for states, tribes, and other entities to enhance habitat connectivity on non-federal lands through wildlife crossings and other habitat connectivity projects. These steps will contribute to the connectivity, persistence, resilience, and adaptability of native fish, wildlife, and plant species in the face of climate change. The Wildlife Corridors Conservation Act directs federal land and water management agencies to collaborate with each other, and with states, tribes, local governments, and private landowners, to develop joint strategies, as well as to manage national wildlife corridors according to the habitat connectivity needs of native species. H.R. 2795 also establishes a publicly available database to inform the management and future designations of corridors through a National Native Species Habitats and Corridors GIS Database.

In addition to helping conserve species in the face of climate change and other significant threats, the Wildlife Corridors Conservation Act will improve outdoor recreational opportunities for people who hunt, fish, and observe nature, increasing economic revenue for local economies. According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, "101.6 million Americans—40 percent of the

U.S. population 16 years old and older—participated in wildlife-related activities in 2016, such as hunting, fishing, and wildlife-watching.”³ These outdoor recreationists and enthusiasts contributed \$156 billion to the economy.³

While we cannot immediately halt the impacts of climate change or the extinction crisis, we can and must take steps to bolster the resilience of biodiversity in the United States by ensuring species are able to move between existing islands of intact habitat via connectivity corridors. TWS supports H.R. 2795, the Wildlife Corridors Conservation Act of 2019, as an important step in this direction.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit our views on this important bill.

Sincerely,



Drew McConville
Senior Managing Director of Government Relations

1. Center for Biological Diversity, “The Extinction Crisis”, https://www.biologicaldiversity.org/programs/biodiversity/elements_of_biodiversity/extinction_crisis/. Accessed 16 Oct. 2019.
2. Gilbert-Norton, Lynne et. al, “A Meta-Analytic Review of Corridor Effectiveness”, Conservation Biology, http://www.conservewildlifeni.org/downloads/cwnj_273.pdf, 2010.
3. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, “National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, & Wildlife-Associated Recreation (FHWAR): 2016”, https://wsfirprograms.fws.gov/Subpages/NationalSurvey/National_Survey.htm, 2016.