

COLORADO AND WILDLIFE CORRIDORS

PROPOSED HABITAT CONNECTIVITY RESOLUTION

Senate Joint Resolution 21-021 is bipartisan legislation that would protect and enhance habitat connectivity through the following measures:

- Commissioning a report identifying wildlife corridors, their benefits, and voluntary policies and programs that would support willing landowners to improve habitat connectivity across the landscape.
- Encouraging state agencies to build on Governor Jared Polis' executive order on big game migration by collecting data on habitat connectivity for all native wildlife species.
- Establishing a working group to develop state policies to protect wildlife corridors.

COLORADO'S LEGACY OF CORRIDOR AND CONNECTIVITY WORK

- Colorado's Department of Natural Resources has demonstrated a commitment to protecting wildlife corridors. In 2019, Governor Polis issued an executive order (EO D-2019-011) to preserve the traditional migration corridors of big game species native to Colorado. Colorado Parks and Wildlife's (CPW) 2020 Status Report on Big Game Winter Range Migration Corridors highlighted the need to invest in landscape-scale analysis of the barriers, land use practices, and climatic changes that threaten migration corridors and seasonal habitat.
- Similarly, The Colorado Department of Transportation is partnering with CPW to identify wildlife- vehicle collision hotspots on highways along Colorado's Western and Eastern Slopes. The agencies also partnered to design innovative wildlife overpass and underpass systems on Interstate 285, Interstate 550, Interstate 160/State Highway 151, and State Highway 9.
- The General Assembly has also taken some initial steps to address this urgent issue. For example, in 2003, the state legislature passed the Wildlife Habitat Stamp Act, which protects critical habitat such as winter range and migration corridors. In 2010, the General Assembly passed the Wildlife Crossing Zones Act, which aims to reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions. Last year, a tribute to habitat connectivity was read on the state House Floor. This year, a bipartisan group of legislators wrote a letter to the General Assembly calling for additional measures to address habitat fragmentation and facilitate wildlife movement.

Colorado now needs a comprehensive, landscape-scale, ecosystem-based approach to protecting habitat connectivity if we are to effectively preserve our rich biodiversity heritage and ensure healthy communities and economies for generations to come.



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WILDLIFE CORRIDORS HELP COLORADO'S ECONOMY

Ensuring habitat connectivity will help bolster Colorado's wildlife populations. Many of Colorado's iconic wildlife—including moose, elk, deer, and pronghorn, as well as non-game species such as Canada lynx, greenback cutthroat trout, and boreal toad—depend on intact seasonal habitats and the migratory routes that connect them. Healthy and resilient wildlife populations, as well as connected natural landscapes, create unique outdoor recreation opportunities in Colorado.



Employs more than
511,000 Coloradans.



Contributes more than
\$62.5B in economic output.



Provides \$9.4B in local
and state tax revenue.

COLORADO AND ROAD ECOLOGY

Protecting wildlife corridors makes our roads safer:

- In 2016, CDOT reported almost 4,000 wildlife-vehicle collisions, which resulted in nearly 400 people injuries and, tragically, in multiple deaths.
- States that build wildlife crossings to improve motorist safety and restore wildlife corridors see a decrease in wildlife-vehicle collisions by up to 90%, as was the case with the Highway 9 project between Silverthorne and Kremmling.

STATE OF THE ROCKIES CONSERVATION IN THE WEST POLL

A recent poll surveying voters across the West, including over 400 in Colorado, found that:

- 66 percent of voters support funding for protecting wildlife corridors.
- 71 percent support funding for conserving critical wildlife habitat.
- 64 percent support funding to ensure opportunities for outdoor recreation.
- An overwhelming majority—87 percent—believe the outdoor economy is important to the future of their state.