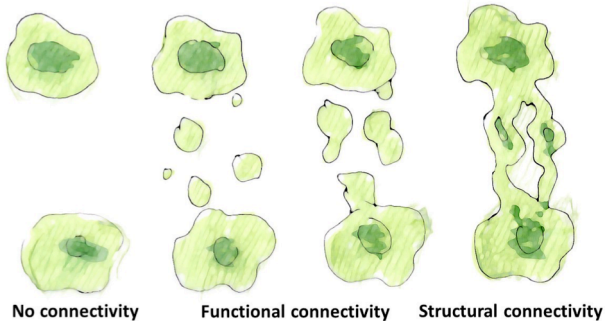
The Wildlife Corridors Conservation Act of 2018


Credit: T. Butcher

What is the Wildlife Corridors Conservation Act?

The Wildlife Corridors Conservation Act establishes a **National Wildlife Corridors System** to designate national wildlife corridors on federal public lands, as well as funding for states, tribes, and other entities to protect wildlife corridors on non-federal lands. This will ensure that fish, wildlife, and plants can migrate between habitats for genetic exchange and climate adaptation. The bill directs federal land and water management agencies to collaborate with each other, as well as with states, tribes, local governments, and private landowners, to manage national wildlife corridors and according to the habitat connectivity needs of native species. The bill also creates a publicly available National Wildlife Corridors Database to inform corridor protection. Establishing this program is a critical step forward in protecting and restoring fish, wildlife, and plant species populations across our nation's lands and waters.



When habitats are isolated from one another, species suffer because they cannot access the resources, mates, or genetic diversity they need to survive.

What species benefit from corridors?

All of them! The beauty of this bill is that all of our native wildlife – from wide-ranging carnivores to specialized amphibians – will benefit from protected corridors. **Florida panthers** need corridors for dispersal (when the young head out on their own to find new territory) and to find mates. Because these panthers have such a large home range, corridors help to provide enough space by linking protected areas together and can help reduce human conflict by offering an alternate route around cities and towns. **Pronghorns** are an important game species in the southwest, but their survival depends upon the ability to migrate seasonally. With a designated corridor, pronghorn would be able to migrate south during the winter to access resources, like food, that are unavailable during the cold season. Even small insects like the **monarch butterfly** need protected corridors to migrate up to 3,000 miles in search of warmer climates in Mexico because they can't withstand freezing temperatures. It can take 3-4 generations to complete a full migration and without places along the flyway for them to rest and reproduce, we would lose this iconic species. Species have different reasons why corridors are important to their survival, but we could have a proven solution that works for all of them: a National Wildlife Corridors System!

By focusing on landscape-scale habitat connectivity, we can ensure the health of whole ecosystems – from Florida panther to pronghorn to butterflies.


Credit: Mark Conlin


Credit: Scott McKinley


Credit: Robin Winkelman

How does the Act work?

- Grants authority to key federal agencies to designate National Wildlife Corridors, which will be managed in a way that contributes to the connectivity, persistence, resilience, and adaptability of native species.
- Creates a Wildlife Connectivity Database to support decisionmakers that will be freely available to states, tribes, federal agencies, and the public.
- Creates a Wildlife Movement Grant Program that will fund priority projects on state, private, and tribal lands.
- Creates Regional Wildlife Movement Councils to develop regional plans, identifying priority areas on non-federal lands.
- Establishes the National Coordination Committee to administer the Wildlife Movement Grant Program and facilitate collaboration between National Wildlife Corridors on public lands and regional wildlife connectivity efforts.
- Promotes public safety and mitigates species damage where corridors cross roadways.
- Provides incentives for private landowners to protect wildlife corridors using funds from Department of Agriculture conservation programs.
- A Wildlife Corridors Stewardship and Protection Fund will be established to provide the financial resources necessary to carry out and sustain this system.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Why is this important?

- America's native fish, wildlife, and plant species are part of our rich natural heritage and an important legacy to pass on to future generations.
- Many species in the US are declining. Scientists estimate that one in five species are at risk of extinction.
- One of the greatest threats to species survival and diversity is the loss, degradation, and fragmentation of natural habitats. America's landscapes are losing species, becoming biologically unproductive and unhealthy because native habitats have become islands, cutoff from other landscapes and waterways, unable to sustain vital natural processes, such as: dispersal, migration, genetic exchange, acquisition of resources, population stability, and climate adaptation, among others.
- Climate change is a significant threat to native species. Plant communities are shifting in elevation and location, coastal waters are warming, and coastal habitats are eroding due to sea level rise and land subsidence. Conserving, restoring, and establishing new ecological connections to facilitate the shift of species into more suitable habitat is a key climate change adaptation strategy.
- Protecting landscape corridors and hydrologic connectivity is a broadly accepted strategy to conserving native fish, wildlife, and plant species and ensuring ecosystem resilience, and it is typically one of the first steps in restoration and recovery planning. It has already been integrated by proactive state and federal agencies, such as California, the Western Governors Association, and NOAA, and by international agreements between northeastern US states and southeastern Canadian provinces.

Now is the time to support a Wildlife Corridors Conservation Act to protect and reconnect our national heritage.
For more information, contact Susan Holmes, Policy Director, at susan@wildlandsnetwork.org
or visit our website at www.wildlandsnetwork.org