

December 6, 2018

The Honorable Tom Udall
531 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Don Beyer
431 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Re: The Wildlife Corridors Conservation Act of 2018

Dear Senator Udall and Representative Beyer,

On behalf of the millions of members and supporters across the country represented by our 162 organizations, we write to express our strong support for the **Wildlife Corridors Conservation Act of 2018**. We thank you for your leadership on this important legislation that will help protect and restore America's native wildlife and create more resilient landscapes.

The United States is a world leader in efforts to conserve wildlife through a robust network of public lands and waters that includes national parks, national wildlife refuges, national forests, and other conservation areas, yet wildlife populations continue to decline. Scientists estimate that one in five animal and plant species in the United States are at risk of extinction, largely as a result of habitat loss, degradation, and fragmentation. Linking habitat through connective corridors is critical for sustaining biodiversity, ecosystem function, and robust populations into the future. Corridors increase wildlife movement between habitat areas by approximately 50 percent compared to areas not connected by corridors. As species adapt to rapidly changing conditions, including the impacts of climate change, we must take steps to facilitate their ability to travel between existing habitat cores to increase breeding success, genetic diversity, and access to food and shelter. The fourth National Climate Assessment, released earlier this month, stated "*habitat fragmentation and loss of connectivity (due to urbanization, roads, dams, etc.) can prevent species from tracking shifts in their required climate.*" Therefore, it is critical that the United States redouble its efforts to retain, restore, and establish wildlife corridors in order to ease wildlife movements and range shifts.

The Wildlife Corridors Conservation Act establishes a National Wildlife Corridors Program that would provide for 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. This will ensure that fish, wildlife, and plants can move between habitats for migration, dispersal, genetic exchange, and climate adaptation across the country. 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 develop and manage national wildlife corridors consistent with existing laws 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.

The Wildlife Corridors Conservation Act will also improve recreational opportunities for constituents 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. These outdoor enthusiasts contributed \$156 billion to the economy.

The Act will also improve human and wildlife road safety by mitigating wildlife collisions. Estimated costs for wildlife vehicle collisions are more than \$8 billion dollars per year in the United States. Wildlife crossings,

including bridges, enlarged and retrofitted culverts, and tunnels designed to help wildlife safely cross the road have proven to be the most effective measure to reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions.

Increasingly, wildlife corridor protection has bipartisan support around the country. The Western Governors' Association approved a resolution that established a Corridor Protection Initiative, issued an extensive Wildlife Corridors Initiative report, and approved the Protecting Wildlife Migration Corridors and Crucial Wildlife Habitat in the West policy resolution. The Conference of New England Governors and Eastern Canadian Premiers passed a resolution recognizing the importance of ecological connectivity for the adaptability and resilience of their region's ecosystems, biodiversity, and human communities in the face of climate change.

Federal agencies and states are also beginning to work together to protect wildlife corridors. The U.S. Forest Service, working with the state of Wyoming, private landowners, sportsmen, and conservation organizations, established the nation's first federally designated wildlife corridor to protect a centuries-old migration route for pronghorn that connects their summer range in Grand Teton National Park with their winter range far to the south in Wyoming's Green River Valley. Today, the Path of the Pronghorn conserves one of the longest remaining terrestrial mammal migration corridors in North America. Additionally, states such as New Hampshire and California have recently passed legislation to protect wildlife corridors.

Many of America's most treasured wildlife, including the Florida panther, bighorn sheep, the monarch butterfly, bull trout, and dozens of salmon runs are threatened by habitat loss and fragmentation. Just as people need roads and highways to travel from one place to another, fish, wildlife, and even plants also need corridors connecting natural communities. The Wildlife Corridors Conservation Act will provide key tools for conserving our nation's wildlife and natural heritage for future generations.

Sincerely,

Adirondack Council
Adirondack Wild: Friends of the Forest Preserve
Adirondack Wildlife Refuge
Adirondacks to Algonquin Collaborative
Alaska's Big Village Network
Alliance for the Great Lakes
American Bird Conservancy
American Conservation Film Festival
American Forests
Animal Welfare Institute
Appalachian Trail Conservancy
Arc of Appalachia Preserve System
Arizona Wilderness Coalition
Atlanta Audubon Society
Blue Ridge Land Conservancy
Born Free USA
Butterfly Farms
California Chaparral Institute
California Invasive Plant Council
California Native Plant Society
Californians for Western Wilderness
California Wilderness Coalition (CalWild)
Center for Biological Diversity
Center for Large Landscape Conservation
Central Colorado Wilderness Coalition
Clark Fork Coalition
Cold Hollow to Canada
Colorado Mountain Club
Community Farm Alliance
Conejos Clean Water
Conservation Ecology LLC
Conservation Northwest

Conservation Science Partners
Conserve Southwest Utah
Continental Divide Trail Coalition
Cougar Rewilding Foundation
Craighead Institute
Defenders of Wildlife
Delaware Center for the Inland Bays
Delaware Ecumenical Council on Children and Families
Delaware Nature Society
Dogwood Alliance
Downeast Salmon Federation
Earthjustice
ECO-resolutions
Endangered Habitats League
Endangered Species Coalition
Environmental Action Committee of West Marin
Environmental Protection Information Center
E.O Wilson Biodiversity Foundation
Florida Wildlife Corridor
Fly Fishers International
Friends of Blackwater
Friends of the Inyo
Friends of Sylvania Wilderness
Friends of the Wisconsin Wolf & Wildlife
Foundation Earth
Ghost Cat Publications
Grand Canyon Trust
Grand Canyon Wildlands Council
Greater Hells Canyon Council
Greater Yellowstone Coalition
Great Lakes Wildlife Alliance
Great Old Broads for Wilderness

Green Valley Farm + Mill
Harris Center for Conservation Education
Howling For Wolves
Hudson Highlands Land Trust
Idaho Conservation League
International Fund for Animal Welfare
Kentucky Natural Lands Trust
Kettle Range Conservation Group
Klamath Forest Alliance
KS Wild
League of Humane Voters-Wisconsin Chapter
LIFT Economy
Long Branch Environmental Education Center
Los Padres ForestWatch
Maine Appalachian Trail Land Trust
Maine Audubon
Marine Resources Council
Montana Wilderness Association
MountainTrue
National Parks Conservation Association
National Wolfwatcher Coalition
New Mexico Sportsmen
New Mexico Wilderness Alliance
New Mexico Wildlife Federation
Northcoast Environmental Center
Northeast Wilderness Trust
Northwest Sportfishing Industry Association
NY4WHALES
Old-Growth Forest Network
Once a Forest
Open Space Institute
Oregon Wild
Otter Ridge LLC
Partners in Forestry Cooperative
Public Interest Coalition
Quality Parks
Quiet Use Coalition
Radnor to River
Red Wolf Coalition
Rockbridge Area Conservation Council
Rocky Mountain Wild
Round River Conservation Studies
SandyHook SeaLife Foundation
Santa Fe Forest Coalition
San Juan Citizens Alliance
San Luis Valley Ecosystem Council
Save Our Sky Blue Waters
Save Our Wild Salmon Coalition
Save People Save Wildlife

SAVE THE FROGS!
Save the Manatee
Save Wolves Now Network
Sequoia ForestKeeper
Sierra Club
Sierra Club Northern New Mexico Group
South Florida Wildlands Association
Southwest Environmental Center
SouthWings
Summit County Safe Passages
Teton Wildlife Rehabilitation Center
The Clinch Coalition
The Lands Council
The Maine Wolf Coalition, Inc.
The Rewilding Institute
The Vermont Land Trust
The Wilderness Society
True Grass Farms
Turtle Island Restoration Network
Two Countries One Forest
Upper Peninsula Environmental Coalition
Ventana Wilderness Alliance
Vermont Natural Resources Council
Vet Voice Foundation
Virginia Conservation Network
Western Environmental Law Center
Western Nebraska Resources Council
Western Watersheds Project
Western Wildlife Conservancy
White Mountain Conservation League
Wild Connections
Wilderness Workshop
Wild Earth Guardians
Wild Farm Alliance
WILD Foundation
Wildlands Network
Wildlife Conservation Advocacy Southwest
Wildlife Land Trust
Wild South
Wild Virginia
Winter Wildlands Alliance
Wolf Conservation Center
Wolf Haven International
Wyoming Hunters & Anglers Alliance
Wyoming Outdoor Council
Wyoming Wilderness Association
Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation
Yellowstone to Uintas Connection
Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative