Adirondack Council \* Adirondack Wild: Friends of the Forest Preserve \* Adirondack Wildlife Refuge

Adirondacks to Algonquin Collaborative \* American Forests \* Alliance for the Great Lakes

 Arizona Wilderness Coalition \* Blue Ridge Land Conservancy \* California Invasive Plant Council

Center for Biological Diversity \* Center for Large Landscape Conservation \* Clark Fork Coalition

 Cold Hollow to Canada \* Conservation Ecology LLC \* Conservation Northwest \* Conservation Science Partners Conserve Southwest Utah \* Cougar Rewilding Foundation \* Craighead Institute

Downeast Salmon Federation \* Endangered Species Coalition \* E.O Wilson Biodiversity Foundation

Environmental Protection Information Center \* Florida Wildlife Corridor \* Friends of the Wisconsin Wolf & Wildlife Grand Canyon Wildlands Council \* Greater Yellowstone Coalition \* Great Old Broads for Wilderness

Harris Center for Conservation Education \* Hells Canyon Preservation Council \* Humane Society \* Wildlife Land Trust Idaho Conservation League \* Kentucky Natural Lands Trust \* Klamath Forest Alliance

League of Humane Voters-Wisconsin Chapter \* Long Branch Environmental Education Center \* Los Padres ForestWatch Maine Appalachian Trail Land Trust \* National Parks and Conservation Association \* New Mexico Wilderness Alliance Northcoast Environmental Center \* Northwest Sportfishing Industry Association \* Open Space Institute \* Oregon Wild Radnor to River \* Red Wolf Coalition \* Rocky Mountain Wild \* Save Our Wild Salmon Coalition

Save People Save Wildlife \* Sierra Club \* South Florida Wildlands Association \* Southwest Environmental Center

The Rewilding Institute \* The Wilderness Society \* Turtle Island Restoration Network \* Two Countries One Forest Upper Peninsula Environmental Coalition \* Vermont Natural Resources Council \* Western Environmental Law Center Western Watersheds Project \* Western Wildlife Conservancy \* Wild Earth Guardians \* Wild Farm Alliance

Wildlands Network \* Wild South \* Wild Virginia \* Winter Wildlands Alliance \* Wolf Haven International

Wyoming Outdoor Council \* Yellowstone to Uintas Connection \* Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative

December XX , 2018

The Honorable Tom Udall

531 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington DC, 20510

The Honorable Don Beyer

431 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: The Wildlife Corridors Conservation Act of 2018

Dear Senator Udall and Representative Beyer,

On behalf of our millions of members and supporters nationwide, 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,[[1]](#footnote-1) 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 are able to 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. Establishingthis 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.[[2]](#footnote-2) 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,[[3]](#footnote-3) issued an extensive Wildlife Corridors Initiative report,[[4]](#footnote-4) and approved the Protecting Wildlife Migration Corridors and Crucial Wildlife Habitat in the West policy resolution.[[5]](#footnote-5) 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.[[6]](#footnote-6)

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,

XXX

1. 1. Chivian, E. and A. Bernstein (eds.)  2008. *Sustaining life: How human health depends on biodiversity*. Center for Health and the Global Environment. Oxford University Press, New York. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. See <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/publications/research/safety/08034/03.cfm>. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. See <https://www.westgov.org/wildlife-corridors-and-crucial-habitat>. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. See <http://www.westgov.org/images/dmdocuments/wildlife08.pdf>. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. See [https://www.blm.gov/style/medialib/blm/wy/information/NEPA/pfodocs/anticline/revdr-comments/ eg.Par.89268.File.dat/02Bio-attach14.pdf](https://www.blm.gov/style/medialib/blm/wy/information/NEPA/pfodocs/anticline/revdr-comments/eg.Par.89268.File.dat/02Bio-attach14.pdf). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. See <http://www.coneg.org/Data/Sites/1/media/40-3-ecological-connectivity-en.pdf>. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)