Wildlife Corridors & Crossings – State Action

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What are Wildlife Corridors and Crossings? Why are they needed?

- **Corridors:** Areas of natural land or water that allow wildlife, fish, plants (and often people) to travel between fragmented habitat to access habitat they need
- **Crossings:** Underpasses, overpasses or culverts across roads or highways that allow safe passage and connect habitat
- **Greatest threats to wildlife:** habitat loss and fragmentation, climate change
- **Large landscape corridors and crossings are vital to survival of natural systems:** Clean air, water supply, flood control, filtration, quality of life
- **State action now even more important**
Flight of the monarch butterfly

The migratory route of monarch butterflies takes them over and through prime U.S. farmland. Conservationists say monarchs are threatened by pesticides and their primary food source, milkweed, is often sprayed as a weed.
Acres of Grassland/Wetlands/Shrub Land Converted to All Crops
By county, 2008-2011

Habitat lost in the milkweed/monarch corridor 2008-2011.

Milkweed/monarch corridor

Total Acres: 23,681,611

Increased acreage - 8.4 corn, 5.6 soybeans, 5.2 winter wheat

Calculated using the USDA-NASS Cropland Data Layer for crop years 2008 (56m), 2009(56m), 2010(30m), & 2011(30m).
Types of State Measures: General

- Requesting education of the public and/or agencies about importance of corridors
- Requiring study and recommendations for action by relevant agencies
- Creating a task force of stakeholders to make recommendations or designate corridors
- Requiring consideration of corridors or crossings for state construction projects
- Requiring consideration of corridors in growth plans
- Requesting voluntary consideration of corridors
Types of State Legislation: Specific

- Legislation based on agency and/or NGO recommendations for specific bridge/tunnel crossing project or establishment of a corridor
- Requiring speed limits, lights and/or warnings of wildlife on highways; fencing along high WVC areas
- Funding for project installation, maintenance
- Funding for purchase of land for corridors/crossings
- Funding for monitoring, evaluating after project complete
- Authorizing partnerships for specific projects
2007: Western Governors Association Wildlife Corridors Initiative

- 16 Western state governors launched the Wildlife Corridors Initiative as a framework for wildlife corridor and habitat conservation
- “Protecting Wildlife Migration Corridors and Crucial Wildlife Habitat in the West” – unanimous WGA resolution
- WGA passed additional wildlife corridor initiatives in 2010 and 2013, including Crucial Habitat Assessment Tools (CHAT) to identify corridors for transportation agency planning
2016: New England Governors & Eastern Canadian Premiers

Resolution 40-3
Resolution on Ecological Connectivity, Adaptation to Climate Change, and Biological Diversity

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New Mexico 2003-2013: Ten years on crossings - with Wild Friends!

- 2003: **HJM 3** requested the DOT to educate public about WVCs, encourage DOT and DGF to sign MOU to coordinate information on wildlife crossings

- 2004: HJM 21 “Wildlife Crossing Memorial” (did not pass)

- 2009: **HJM 4** requested that state agencies share information about key wildlife corridors

- 2011: **HJM 10** requested agencies to coordinate for a pilot traffic safety project to reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions and report to the Legislature
New Mexico, cont.

- 2013: HM 1/SM 11 requested that Game and Fish hold a workshop with Transportation Department to identify future wildlife crossing projects and funding; requested the Governor to declare a Wildlife Safety Awareness Day

Update! - As a result of our 2013 memorials on wildlife safety zones, NM Game and Fish has received funding to build a wildlife safety zone! The funded project will put three miles of fencing on I-25 through Raton; a second project will involve five miles of fencing near Cuba, and will funnel wildlife below the highway at two bridges over the Rio Puerco, and has a "strong chance" of being funded. Mark Watson from NMGF says, "hats off to Wild Friends!"

▶ http://wildfriends.unm.edu
Identify key habitat connectivity and migration corridors used by key species across the shared border;

Evaluate and prioritize corridors and ID corridors to further evaluate;

Involve the tribes on any key habitat corridor crossing tribal land;

Map key corridors with a mutually agreeable mapping system;

Identify existing and potential land use changes and other impediments limiting key wildlife corridors;

Develop and prioritize strategies for protection of key wildlife corridors;

Share strategies with land management agencies, counties, municipalities, NGOs and the public
Colorado - Crossings for Public Safety

- **HB 1238** signed into law June 2010
- Authorized DOT to establish Wildlife Crossing Zones
  - Lower speed limits
  - Signs warning of wildlife crossing zones
  - Signs can indicate times of day, times of year
  - Double traffic fines
  - Half the penalty surcharge goes to a WCZ Safety Account
  - Excludes all interstates
- Required DOT to report to legislature:
  - On zones created
  - Impact to WVCs
  - Recommend whether to cancel or expand WCZs
Maine 2010: Restoring aquatic corridors
HP 1224 Stream Crossings

- 90 percent of stream culverts under Maine’s roads block fish and other aquatic organisms. New requirements are 175% - 325% increase in widths for stream crossing projects.

- Potential benefits from upsizing stream crossings to meet the 1.2 x bank full requirements:
  - Accommodating increased flows resulting from storms, floods
  - Reduced maintenance – less risk of plugging
  - Reduced scouring and storm related damage
  - Reduced metal pipe corrosion
  - Reduction in vehicle-wildlife collisions
  - Added value to natural resource-based economy: sport and commercial fishing, eco-tourism, habitat creation/restoration

- Older culverts not required to be redesigned

- source: CLLC report, 2011
California: State policy encouraging corridors

**AB 498** passed in 2015:

- Encourages wildlife crossings and development mitigation and conservation
- Creates a statewide *policy for considering* wildlife corridors and “habitat strongholds”
- State policy is to *encourage voluntary steps* to protect the functioning of wildlife corridors:
  - Acquisition or protection of wildlife corridors as open space through conservation easements
  - Installing wildlife-friendly or directional fencing
  - Siting mitigation and conservation banks in areas that provide habitat connectivity for affected fish and wildlife
  - Providing roadway undercrossings, overpasses, oversized culverts, or bridges for fish and wildlife passage between habitat areas
This iconic image of “P22” helped inspire plans for the largest built-wildlife corridor in the world.

Nat. Geo. photos motivated Los Angelinos to purchase land, acquire funding, approve a project (2016), and develop an impact statement on construction of a 165’ wide corridor over Hwy 101 beside the Santa Monica Mountains to solve genetic isolation of CA cougars.
California: **AB 2087**

**Regional Conservation Investment Strategies**

Chapter 455, Statutes of 2016:

- Creates a new conservation planning tool – “Regional Conservation Investment Strategies” to identify and support highest value conservation actions

- Creates a tool for the prioritization and permanent preservation and restoration of wildlife corridors

- source: CA Asm. Marc Levine web site
New Hampshire 2016: Identify, assess corridors

Background:
- Concern over Route 2 in Northern NH
- Numerous animals needing to cross – moose, lynx, etc.
- Many wildlife collisions
- Area had been studied, resident had worked for a crossing for years

**SB 376:** “It is recognized as a public good that habitat connectivity, including wildlife corridors and habitat linkages, be maintained and expanded.”
- Requires a DOT study and report to:
  - Identify existing wildlife corridors, riparian corridors, and potential crossings;
  - Assess the need for new corridors; and
  - Assess existing statutes, rules, and regulations that affect wildlife corridors and make recommendations concerning changes
- Report to legislature due June 2018
AN ACT TO REQUIRE THE MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE, FISHERIES AND PARKS, IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY AND THE MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION, TO IDENTIFY EXISTING AND NEEDED WILDLIFE CORRIDORS; TO FILE A REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

SECTION 1. The Legislature finds and declares that:

(a) It is recognized as a public good that habitat connectivity, including wildlife corridors and habitat linkages, be maintained and expanded. It is the policy of the State of Mississippi to encourage, wherever feasible and practical, voluntary steps to protect the functioning of wildlife corridors through various means, as applicable.

(b) Areas containing diverse ecological and geological characteristics are vital to the continual health and well-being of the state's natural resources and of its citizens.

(c) Connectivity between wildlife habitats is important to the long-term viability of the state's biodiversity. Preserving and connecting high-quality habitat for wildlife can create habitat strongholds. Increasingly fragmented habitats threaten the state's wildlife species.

(d) Analysis of the state's habitat connectivity benefits from the consideration of all relevant data, including information from private and public landowners.
We have National Parks and Monuments - how about National Wildlife Corridors?

The Wildlife Corridors Conservation Act (Beyer (D-VA)) would establish a National Wildlife Corridors System to provide for the protection and restoration of native fish, wildlife, and plant species and their habitats with corridors throughout the United States.
Get Connected!

Questions?

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