

**First Regular Session  
Seventy-third General Assembly  
STATE OF COLORADO**

**REVISED**

LLS NO. R21-0935.01 Darren Thornberry x4143

**SJR21-021**

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**Senate Committees**

**House Committees**

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**SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 21-021**

101      **CONCERNING THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY'S SUPPORT OF THE STATE OF**  
102              **COLORADO'S EFFORTS TO PRESERVE THE STATE'S FLORA AND**  
103              **FAUNA THROUGH THE PROTECTION OF WILDLIFE HABITAT**  
104              **CONNECTIVITY.**

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1              WHEREAS, Colorado's natural environment and numerous native  
2      plant and wildlife species contribute greatly to the economy and play a  
3      vital role in ensuring a sustainable future for current and future  
4      generations of Coloradans and enhancing their quality of life; and

5              WHEREAS, Sporting and outdoors enthusiasts and tourists from  
6      across the world visit Colorado to experience our state's outdoor  
7      landscapes and abundant wildlife; and

8              WHEREAS, Colorado boasts the largest Rocky Mountain elk herd

Shading denotes HOUSE amendment. Double underlining denotes SENATE amendment.  
*Capital letters or bold & italic numbers indicate new material to be added to existing statute.*  
*Dashes through the words indicate deletions from existing statute.*

HOUSE  
Amended Final Reading  
June 4, 2021

SENATE  
Final Reading  
May 24, 2021

1 in the world, which contains over 250,000 animals, and the state is also  
2 home to significant populations of other iconic big game species such as  
3 mule deer, bighorn sheep, pronghorn, and moose, as well as numerous  
4 other endemic wildlife species; and

5 WHEREAS, The 2019 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor  
6 Recreation Plan reports that outdoor recreation contributes more than \$62  
7 billion to the state's economy, and in 2017 employed about 511,000  
8 people, was responsible for about one-tenth (\$35 billion) of the state's  
9 gross domestic product, and brought in \$9.4 billion in local, state, and  
10 federal tax revenue; and

11 WHEREAS, One in five species is at risk of extinction in the  
12 United States, and Colorado is home to 33 threatened or endangered  
13 species; and

14 WHEREAS, Changing climate conditions are exacerbating the  
15 existing pressures on the natural habitats of wildlife, and protecting  
16 wildlife corridors and maintaining connected habitats is recognized as one  
17 of the most ecologically effective climate adaptation and biodiversity  
18 conservation measures; and

19 WHEREAS, Intact habitats and intact wildlife corridors that  
20 connect those habitats are vital to ensuring that Colorado's wildlife  
21 populations continue to thrive; and

22 WHEREAS, Protecting wildlife corridors has been shown to  
23 improve the herd vitality of big game species that are critical to  
24 Colorado's outdoor recreation economy; and

25 WHEREAS, Wildlife corridors serve to connect wildlife habitat  
26 areas and allow for the movement, migration, and dispersal of native fish,  
27 wildlife, and plant species; and

28 WHEREAS, Wildlife corridors provide benefits to humans,  
29 including increased property values of land adjacent to wildlife corridors,  
30 increased food security, and additional ecosystem services such as  
31 pollination, carbon sequestration, erosion control, and air and water  
32 purification; and

33 WHEREAS, Colorado's population continues to grow, placing  
34 pressure on the natural habitats that wildlife depend upon for survival;

1 habitat loss and fragmentation are major contributors to declines in  
2 populations of native fish and wildlife, particularly species that migrate  
3 annually between seasonal habitats; and roadways disrupt annual big  
4 game migration, and vehicular collisions with wildlife pose risks to  
5 people, property, and the animals that contribute so much to Colorado's  
6 reputation as a place to admire natural wonders; and

7 WHEREAS, In Colorado, nearly 4,000 vehicle crashes involving  
8 wildlife are reported to law enforcement every year, resulting in injuries  
9 and fatalities to humans and costing an estimated \$80 million annually;  
10 this figure does not include the value of wildlife killed in vehicular  
11 collisions, the impact on the health of wildlife populations, or the loss and  
12 fragmentation of the vibrant habitats wildlife call home; and

13 WHEREAS, Wildlife crossing structures built within important  
14 wildlife corridors increase public safety and are highly effective at  
15 reducing wildlife-vehicle collisions and the costs associated with those  
16 collisions; and

17 WHEREAS, The state of Colorado, through the governor's office  
18 and state agencies including the Colorado department of transportation  
19 (CDOT), the department of natural resources (DNR), Colorado parks and  
20 wildlife (CPW), as well as tribal governments, counties, federal agencies,  
21 and nongovernmental partners that represent academia, nonprofit  
22 organizations, and biological and engineering sciences, have all  
23 demonstrated commitments to protecting wildlife corridors and reducing  
24 wildlife-vehicle collisions; and

25 WHEREAS, These efforts are reflected in, among other policies,  
26 Colorado Executive Order (EO) D 2019 011, "Conserving Colorado's Big  
27 Game Winter Range and Migration Corridors"; the CPW State Wildlife  
28 Action Plan; the CPW "Colorado Action Plan", the 2020 Colorado State  
29 Action Plan to implement U.S. Department of Interior Secretarial Order  
30 3362: "Improving Habitat Quality in Western Big-Game Winter Range  
31 and Migration Corridors"; the Colorado Wildlife and Transportation  
32 Alliance, formed in 2018; the 2007 Western Governors' Association  
33 Wildlife Corridors Initiative and subsequent multistate efforts including  
34 the Critical Habitat Assessment Tool and CPW's collaboration with the  
35 New Mexico Department of Game and Fish to develop and implement a  
36 "decision support system" that will enable government decision-makers  
37 and others to identify crucial habitats and wildlife corridors along the  
38 states' border early in any planning process for development activities and

1 energy projects; the "Colorado Habitat Stewardship Act of 2007" and  
2 implementing regulations that require oil and gas operators to review  
3 maps of sensitive wildlife habitats and restricted-use occupancy areas that  
4 are maintained by the Colorado Oil and Gas Conservation Commission  
5 to determine whether a proposed drilling location is within such an area;  
6 the Eagle County Comprehensive Plan (2005); and the Summit County  
7 Connectivity Plan (2017-2019); and

8 WHEREAS, CPW has an existing statutory mandate to "maintain  
9 records of areas used by wildlife for migration purposes" (and make such  
10 information available upon request), section 33-3-105, C.R.S., and is  
11 required to collect scientific information necessary to fulfill its duty to  
12 protect wildlife habitats, section 33-1-110 (4), C.R.S.; and

13 WHEREAS, CDOT is already invested in wildlife crossing  
14 projects across the state including but not limited to: The U.S. 285  
15 Nathrop Wildlife Crossing Project, completed in 2018; a partnership  
16 between the Southern Ute Indian Tribe, CDOT, and CPW to construct a  
17 big game overpass and underpass near the US 160/State Highway 151  
18 intersection between Bayfield and Pagosa Springs; on State Highway 9,  
19 the construction of two overpass bridges, five underpasses, 20 miles of  
20 wildlife fencing, and over 60 wildlife escape ramps between Silverthorne  
21 and Kremmling; and the US 550-US 160 Connection Project that will  
22 install two landscape bridges to allow for wildlife movements and one  
23 large game underpass on US 550; and

24 WHEREAS, Dozens of Democratic and Republican state and local  
25 elected officials have signed letters calling for legislative action to  
26 conserve and restore habitat connectivity in Colorado; and

27 WHEREAS, In 2020, the Colorado House of Representatives  
28 introduced a tribute recognizing the state's leadership in advancing  
29 wildlife connectivity and calling for increased efforts to reconnect priority  
30 landscapes, conserve migration routes for big game and other species, and  
31 ensure habitat protection through partnerships, planning, and policies; and

32 WHEREAS, Legislation to increase funding available for  
33 wildlife-vehicle collision mitigation measures and legislation to protect  
34 wildlife corridors are under consideration in both the U.S. House of  
35 Representatives and Senate, and such legislation would contribute to  
36 highway safety, protect wildlife corridors on federal land holdings within  
37 the state, and provide a source of revenue to the state to protect wildlife

1 corridors and pursue highway mitigation projects; and

2 WHEREAS, Comprehensive identification, designation, and  
3 protection of wildlife corridors is a crucial strategy for bolstering  
4 Colorado's ecosystem resiliency and for ensuring the long-term viability  
5 of wildlife populations and communities; and

6 WHEREAS, Wildlife corridors are not bounded by property  
7 ownership or administrative boundaries, and therefore their protection  
8 requires recognition of private property rights and negotiations between  
9 different sovereigns (tribal, states, federal) and land managers (federal,  
10 tribal, state, county, municipal, and private); and

11 WHEREAS, Understanding the state's habitat connectivity status  
12 and potential would benefit from consideration of all relevant data,  
13 including data from federal, tribal, and state agencies and surrounding  
14 states, nonprofit organizations, universities, and private landowners; and

15 WHEREAS, Many state agencies, nonprofit organizations, and  
16 coalitions, as well as public-private partnerships, that are interested in  
17 advancing connectivity across this state and in surrounding states could  
18 benefit from a science-based understanding of current and potential  
19 wildlife corridors; and

20 WHEREAS, Protecting wildlife habitats and wildlife corridors  
21 requires significant financial investments, and the effectiveness and  
22 cost-efficiency of all the existing efforts in the state would be enhanced  
23 by a comprehensive and coordinated effort; now, therefore,

24 *Be It Resolved by the Senate of the Seventy-third General*  
25 *Assembly of the State of Colorado, the House of Representatives*  
26 *concurring herein:*

27 That the general assembly:

- 28 ● Supports EO D 2019 011 and its mandates;
- 29 ● Recommends the development of a working group  
30 including representatives of CPW, DNR, CDOT, other  
31 affected agencies, the governor's office, tribal nations and  
32 communities, sporting organizations, wildlife conservation  
33 organizations, the outdoor recreation industry, private

1 landowners, insurance companies, and other stakeholders,  
2 to consider and develop policy proposals to assist in the  
3 implementation of EO D 2019 011 and to assist the  
4 legislature in crafting legislation necessary to support the  
5 governor's vision and protect wildlife corridors across the  
6 state of Colorado;

7 ● Encourages CPW, in coordination with DNR and CDOT,  
8 pursuant to its mandate under section 33-3-105, C.R.S., to  
9 extend the scope of activity under EO D 2019 011 to  
10 develop or collect data regarding the relationship of all  
11 wildlife habitat areas and the connectivity of those areas for  
12 all game and nongame species. CPW is encouraged to use  
13 the data to develop a plan to provide guidance for state  
14 agency decisions and future policymaking and to develop  
15 targets for the designation and protection of wildlife  
16 corridors. CPW is encouraged to design the plan to  
17 preserve long-term habitat connectivity for all native fish,  
18 wildlife, and plant species to facilitate natural movements,  
19 migration, dispersal, safe road crossing, genetic exchange,  
20 and adaptation to climate and other environmental changes;  
21 and

22   
23 

24 ● Supports the 2019 federal "Wildlife Corridors  
25 Conservation Act" and programs included in 2020 federal  
26 transportation legislation (S. 2302 and H.R. 2) that would  
27 provide funding for states to build wildlife crossing  
28 structures and implement other measures to reduce  
29 wildlife-vehicle collisions, and urges Colorado's  
30 congressional delegation to support these provisions.

31 *Be It Further Resolved*, That copies of this Joint Resolution be sent  
32 to U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack; U.S. Secretary of the  
33 Interior Deb Haaland; U.S. Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg;  
34 each member of Colorado's congressional delegation; the Colorado  
35 Municipal League; Colorado Counties, Inc.; and the Colorado City and  
36 County Management Association, and that these entities be requested to  
37 share the resolution with the relevant planning commissions and highway  
38 authorities.