

February 5, 2020

The Honorable Eleanor Holmes Norton
Chairman
Subcommittee on Highways and Transit
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
House of Representatives
2165 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Rodney Davis
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Highways and Transit
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
House of Representatives
2164 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

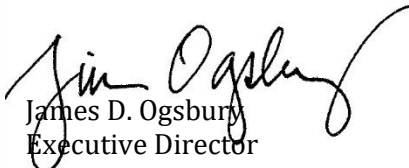
Dear Chairman Norton and Ranking Member Davis:

On behalf of Western Governors, I thank you for conducting the Subcommittee's February 6, 2020 hearing on Transportation Needs of Tribes, Land Management Agencies, and U.S. Territories.

Attached please find WGA Policy Resolution 2019-08, *Wildlife Migration Corridors and Habitat*, which communicates Western Governors' policy on this important issue, and I request that you include this document in the permanent record of the hearing. Please note the Governors' interest in encouraging coordination between federal land management agencies and the U.S. Department of Transportation to integrate wildlife corridors and habitat connectivity into transportation infrastructure planning and development.

Please contact me if you have any questions or require further information. In the meantime, with warm regards and best wishes, I am

Respectfully,



James D. Ogsbury
Executive Director

Attachment



Policy Resolution 2019-08

Wildlife Migration Corridors and Habitat

A. BACKGROUND

1. Through their sovereign and statutory powers, states have primary management authority over fish and wildlife within their borders. Following decades of work, states have developed extensive science, expertise, and knowledge of species and habitats within their borders.
2. Governors bear responsibility for managing state interests and authorities (including those regarding fish and wildlife) as well as safeguarding private property rights within state borders and overseeing state agencies charged with properly managing wildlife, habitat and related resources within their states.
3. States are the primary recipients of economic benefits associated with healthy species and ecosystems. At the same time, the economic costs of compliance with federal environmental regulations can fall disproportionately on western states and local communities. States recognize the importance of economic development and acknowledge the challenges of managing the risk of impacts to fish and wildlife populations and habitat while pursuing economic development.
4. While states exercise primary management authority over fish and wildlife within their borders, habitat for fish and wildlife often spans a patchwork of land ownership types, complicating state efforts to manage and conserve species under their management jurisdiction. This is particularly challenging in western states, where federal ownership constitutes a generally higher percentage of overall land ownership.
5. Daily and seasonal fish and wildlife migration corridors and habitat are necessary to maintain healthy populations of numerous fish and wildlife species. Traditional wildlife migratory routes and aquatic habitat connectivity, however, can be impeded, degraded or eliminated by land or resource development.
6. In western landscapes consisting of patchwork landownership patterns, private landowners play an invaluable role in conserving wildlife migration corridors and providing essential summer and winter range habitat
7. Wildlife-vehicle collisions present a significant threat to public safety and wildlife populations. According to an annual State Farm Mutual Automobile Insurance Company report¹, it is estimated that there were over one million wildlife-vehicle collisions with deer, elk, moose or caribou in the United States between July 2017 and June 2018. When properly designed, wildlife crossing infrastructure (including fencing, overpasses, underpasses, motion sensors and other technology), has been shown to significantly reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions.

¹ <https://newsroom.statefarm.com/2018-deer-crashes-down/>

8. Following significant technical advances in wildlife movement tracking and analysis, western states are pursuing migration initiatives to research, identify, conserve and enhance essential migration corridors and habitat. Through implementation of Secretarial Order 3362, the Department of the Interior (DOI) is working to support western state efforts to conserve and improve priority western big-game winter range and migration corridors.

B. GOVERNORS' POLICY STATEMENT

1. Western Governors believe that federal land management agencies should support state and tribal efforts to identify key wildlife migration corridors and habitat in the West and engage in early and substantive consultation with Governors prior to the promulgation of any policy pertaining to the management of wildlife corridors and habitat.
2. Western Governors urge federal land management agencies and non-governmental organizations – in coordination with state fish and wildlife agencies – to work with private landowners and local communities to identify monetary and non-monetary incentives to encourage voluntary corridor and habitat conservation efforts. Western Governors encourage dialogue among relevant partners in the West to identify collaborative solutions to wildlife corridor and habitat conservation across land ownerships.
3. Western Governors commend the considerable efforts already underway to increase coordination between state fish and wildlife agencies and state departments of transportation to integrate consideration of wildlife corridors and habitat connectivity into transportation infrastructure planning and development. The Governors also support development of best practices to expand state agency coordination.
4. Western Governors urge DOI and the U.S. Department of Transportation to cooperate in a similar manner on projects under their jurisdiction and support intra-state efforts when appropriate.
5. Western Governors believe that any federal efforts to identify, regulate, or conserve wildlife migration corridors through administrative or legislative action must rely upon coordination and consultation with states and should advance collaborative, locally driven initiatives to conserve key wildlife corridors and habitat. Governors further encourage Congress and the Administration to support collaborative and locally developed initiatives through financial and technical assistance.
6. With the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (Pub. L. 114-94) set to expire in 2020, Governors urge Congress to include funding and provisions in the next Highway Bill for state-supported transportation infrastructure projects that support fish and wildlife crossings and habitat connectivity.

C. GOVERNORS' MANAGEMENT DIRECTIVE

1. The Governors direct WGA staff to work with Congressional committees of jurisdiction, the Executive Branch, and other entities where appropriate, to achieve the objectives of this resolution.

2. Furthermore, the Governors direct WGA staff to consult with the Staff Advisory Council regarding its efforts to realize the objectives of this resolution and to keep the Governors apprised of its progress in this regard.

Western Governors enact new policy resolutions and amend existing resolutions on a bi-annual basis. Please consult westgov.org/resolutions for the most current copy of a resolution and a list of all current WGA policy resolutions.