



February 23rd, 2022

Re: Senate Bill 707—Wildlife Corridor Grant Fund

Dear Members of the Agriculture Chesapeake and Natural Resources - Agriculture Subcommittee,

Wildlands Network is a nonprofit organization specializing in restoring and protecting wildlife's ability to move across connected landscapes. For over 30 years, we have worked to resolve issues impacting wildlife movement through science-based research and innovative policy. Our organization was active in the development and passage of the first two wildlife corridor bills in Virginia: SB Senate Bill (SB) 1274 in 2021 and House Bill (HB) 1695 in 2020. We now urge you to consider passing SB 707, which will essentially create a grant fund to help implement the bills passed in previous years.

This Wildlife Corridor Grant Fund legislation comes at an important time, as wildlife-vehicle collisions are an increasingly costly and dangerous impediment to the Commonwealth's motorists. More than 60,000 deer-related crashes occur within the Commonwealth each year, costing approximately [\\$533 million in damages annually](#). Virginia ranks 12th in the United States for deer-related car crashes, experiencing [10,000 serious human injuries and 200 fatalities](#) due to wildlife-vehicle collisions every year. Efforts to protect wildlife corridors and improve habitat connectivity in Virginia are effective in reducing wildlife vehicle collisions. At one particular study site in Virginia, a recently implemented wildlife crossing led to a 98% reduction in wildlife-vehicle collisions.

To date, Virginia has been a leader in taking action to incorporate habitat connectivity considerations into its infrastructure planning. The 2020 legislation (HB1695) directed the Commonwealth to produce a Wildlife Corridor Action Plan (WCAP) to identify important wildlife corridors and road crossings, and the 2021 bill (SB 1274) directed key agencies to incorporate wildlife corridors and road crossings into their planning. With the WCAP's expected release this year, now is the time to help fund and implement this plan. This bill will not only provide the home for these much-needed funds to grow, but the funds in this account will make Virginia competitive in leveraging federal dollars through the new Wildlife Crossings Pilot Program that was passed as part of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

We thank you in advance for your consideration and ask you to pass this bill to advance Virginia's leadership in this crucial conservation and public safety work.

Sincerely,

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