

(Washington, D.C.) – U.S. Rep. Rush Holt (NJ-12), a member of the House Committee on Natural Resources, and Rep. Jared Polis (CO-2) today introduced legislation to protect the nation’s wildlife corridors, which are under threat from urban sprawl and climate change. Wildlife corridors are strips of land in which a wide range of animals – wolves, bison, deer, to name a few - can move and plants can propagate. The bill would help give wildlife the freedom they need to roam and help to continue the hunting and wildlife watching that contribute over \$68 billion a year to the economy. The Center for Large Landscape Conservation has identified three essential wildlife corridors in New Jersey.

“The lives of the American people always have been interwoven with the movement of wildlife. Today, wildlife corridors are vital to the outdoor traditions that are a central part of our national character,” Holt said. “As we celebrate Earth Day this week, we recognize that protecting our planet entails protecting all of its inhabitants. Passing this legislation and preserving wildlife corridors would honor the ideals of Earth Day.”

The Wildlife Corridors Conservation Act would create a national wildlife corridors information program within the Fish and Wildlife Service to collect and disseminate information about essential movement paths to states and federal agencies. It would establish a Wildlife Corridors Stewardship and Protection Fund to provide grants to federal agencies, states, local governments, nonprofits, and corporations for the management and protection of essential wildlife corridors. Finally, it would require the Department of Agriculture, Department of the Interior and the Department of Transportation to consider the preservation of these migration paths in their management plans.

“Smart growth is a popular concept these days, not just on Earth Day, and we need to make decisions about growth with the best information and forethought available.” Polis said. “When development limits wildlife movement, disastrous consequences—from genetic isolation and the spread of disease to over population and car-animal collisions—can occur. This legislation will ensure that our scientific knowledge of wildlife is central to federal planning and provide local communities with the tools they need to maintain healthy ecosystems and public safety.”

“It is vitally important that we identify and maintain habitat connectivity and migration corridors for fish and wildlife in response to the effects of climate change and other landscape level

impacts on these critical resources. This bill will facilitate meaningful cooperative endeavors to this end between states, federal agencies, tribes, industry, and private landowners," observed Gary Taylor, Legislative Director of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies.

Support for the Wildlife Corridors Conservation Act includes New Jersey Conservation, the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, Freedom to Roam, the Society for Conservation Biology, World Wildlife Fund, the Wildlife Alliance, the National Parks Conservation Association, Defenders of Wildlife, the Wildlife Society, the Wildlife Conservation Society, Wildlands Network, the National Wildlife Federation, the Sierra Club, the Humane Society, Conservation Northwest, American Wildlands, Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative, Center for Large Landscape Conservation, and the Western Environmental Law Center.

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