

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

HOUSE RESOLUTION

No. 87 Session of 2023

INTRODUCED BY DALEY, ORTITAY, HILL-EVANS, MADDEN, HANBIDGE, ISAACSON, McNEILL, SAPPEY, RABB, PROBST, SAMUELSON, SALISBURY, SANCHEZ, BENHAM, N. NELSON, BRIGGS, PICKETT, CIRESI, MENTZER, OTTEN, MERSKI, VENKAT, VITALI, BOROWSKI, STEELE, FRANKEL, CONKLIN, STURLA, PISCIOTTANO, GAYDOS, SHUSTERMAN, HOWARD, O'MARA, DEASY, HOGAN, WARREN, WEBSTER, SCOTT, TAKAC, GUENST, KINKEAD, SCHWEYER, SOLOMON, PASHINSKI, BRENNAN, SCHEMEL, MATZIE, MAJOR, HADDOCK, CERRATO, GALLOWAY, MULLINS, FIEDLER AND KRAJEWSKI, APRIL 25, 2023

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON TOURISM AND ECONOMIC AND RECREATIONAL DEVELOPMENT, APRIL 25, 2023

A RESOLUTION

1 Directing the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee to
2 conduct a study and issue a report on the current status,
3 management and benefits of conservation corridors in this
4 Commonwealth.

5 WHEREAS, Pennsylvania is home to an array of ecosystems and
6 has a magnificent diversity of plants, trees and wildlife that
7 benefit from connectivity and the conservation of high-quality
8 habitats, enabling species to thrive when facing habitat
9 stressors and changing environmental conditions; and

10 WHEREAS, Conservation ensures that this Commonwealth's
11 tourism industry continues to expand and thrive, and prevents
12 exploitation, destruction and neglect of this Commonwealth's
13 natural resources; and

14 WHEREAS, Outdoor recreation is among our nation's largest

1 economic sectors; and

2 WHEREAS, Pennsylvania is a leader in outdoor recreation
3 consumer spending, a critical component of our tourism industry;
4 and

5 WHEREAS, Habitat connectivity for wildlife must be maintained
6 and expanded because connectivity between wildlife habitats is
7 important to the long-term viability of this Commonwealth's
8 biodiversity; and

9 WHEREAS, The ecological benefits of habitat connectivity
10 include greater species richness, increased species populations
11 and wider dispersal of animals and plants; and

12 WHEREAS, A habitat stronghold is a high-quality habitat where
13 wildlife populations are strong, diverse and highly functioning;
14 and

15 WHEREAS, The creation of high-quality habitat strongholds for
16 wildlife can lead to more genetically diverse and robust
17 populations; and

18 WHEREAS, It is the policy of the Commonwealth to encourage,
19 wherever feasible and practical, voluntary steps to protect the
20 functioning of conservation corridors through various means; and

21 WHEREAS, Increasingly, fragmented habitats threaten this
22 Commonwealth's plant and wildlife species; and

23 WHEREAS, Understanding this Commonwealth's habitat
24 connectivity status and potential requires consideration of all
25 relevant data, including from Federal and State agencies and
26 surrounding states, nonprofit organizations, universities and
27 private landowners; and

28 WHEREAS, Different commissions and departments in the
29 Commonwealth manage conservation corridors in Pennsylvania; and

30 WHEREAS, Many State agencies, nonprofit organizations,

1 coalitions and public-private partnerships interested in
2 advancing habitat connectivity across this Commonwealth could
3 benefit from improved understanding of current and potential
4 conservation corridors and support each other in coordinating
5 information and joint land management; and

6 WHEREAS, Pennsylvania ranks third in the nation for wildlife
7 vehicle collisions which cost millions of dollars in damage and
8 insurance claims each year; and

9 WHEREAS, Wildlife vehicle collisions have claimed countless
10 lives in recent decades and ensuring motorists' safety as they
11 traverse this Commonwealth's highways is critical; and

12 WHEREAS, It is essential that areas that provide safe
13 wildlife crossings be identified and utilized to prevent
14 wildlife vehicle collisions; and

15 WHEREAS, A study that identifies and evaluates conservation
16 corridors would be beneficial to both humans and wildlife;
17 therefore be it

18 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives direct the
19 Legislative Budget and Finance Committee to conduct a study and
20 issue a report on the current status, management and benefits of
21 conservation corridors in this Commonwealth; and be it further

22 RESOLVED, That the study:

23 (1) identifies and examines the approaches, statutes,
24 measures and management responsibilities of State agencies,
25 nongovernmental organizations and academic institutions to
26 assist in the identification and establishment of
27 conservation corridors in this Commonwealth;

28 (2) identifies existing and needed terrestrial and
29 aquatic conservation corridors in this Commonwealth by
30 synthesizing existing relevant plans and data sets, including

1 Geographic Information Systems spatial data, from
2 governmental agencies, nongovernmental organizations and
3 academic institutions;

4 (3) aggregates the existing economic impact analyses of
5 the establishment of conservation corridors in areas of high
6 incidence of wildlife-vehicle collisions;

7 (4) identifies best practices of corridor
8 identification, corridor implementation and support,
9 including public-private partnerships, interagency
10 coordination and conservation easements; and

11 (5) identifies financial mechanisms and options,
12 including those relevant to each agency and for the
13 Commonwealth as a whole, to fund conservation corridors,
14 including Federal, State and nongovernmental sources;
15 and be it further

16 RESOLVED, That the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee
17 consult with organizations that:

18 (1) have organizational missions and expertise in
19 wildlife habitat and ecological conservation;

20 (2) provide representation of this Commonwealth's 121
21 State parks and 2.2 million acres of forest land, or the
22 interests of private landowners;

23 (3) integrate conservation and economic development in a
24 way that strengthens and inspires communities;

25 (4) collect data on wildlife-vehicle collisions; and

26 (5) have knowledge of relevant issues;

27 and be it further

28 RESOLVED, That the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee
29 be authorized to consult with surrounding states and private
30 landowners that have knowledge of relevant issues; and be it

1 further

2 RESOLVED, That the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee
3 make recommendations to organizations, landowners and agencies
4 relevant to identified conservation corridors regarding
5 collaborative engagement for the management of these areas; and
6 be it further

7 RESOLVED, That the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee
8 prepare a report of its findings and the recommendations of the
9 study and submit the report to the Senate and House of
10 Representatives no later than 18 months after the adoption of
11 this resolution.