

118TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 8104

To amend the Food Security Act of 1985 to improve wildlife habitat connectivity and wildlife migration corridors, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

APRIL 20, 2024

Mr. VASQUEZ (for himself, Mr. ZINKE, and Ms. LEGER FERNANDEZ) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Agriculture

A BILL

To amend the Food Security Act of 1985 to improve wildlife habitat connectivity and wildlife migration corridors, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Habitat Connectivity
5 on Working Lands Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. CONSERVATION PROGRAMS.**

7 (a) DEFINITIONS.—Section 1240A of the Food Secu-
8 rity Act of 1985 (16 U.S.C. 3839aa–1) is amended by
9 adding at the end the following:

1 “(11) HABITAT CONNECTIVITY.—The term
2 ‘habitat connectivity’ means the degree to which
3 landscape or habitat elements facilitate native spe-
4 cies movement among seasonal habitats.

5 “(12) BIG GAME SPECIES.—The term ‘big game
6 species’ means native species of large mammals in-
7 cluding, wild deer, elk, pronghorn, wild sheep, and
8 moose.”.

9 (b) REGIONAL CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP PRO-
10 GRAM CRITICAL CONSERVATION AREAS.—Section
11 1271F(a)(2)(C) of the Food Security Act of 1985 (16
12 U.S.C. 3871f(a)(2)(C)) is amended by inserting “, includ-
13 ing restoration and enhancement of wildlife habitat
14 connectivity and wildlife migration corridors, with a focus
15 on big game species” before “; and”.

16 (c) ENROLLMENT IN THE ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY
17 INCENTIVES PROGRAM AND THE CONSERVATION STEW-
18 ARDSHIP PROGRAM OF GRASSLAND ENROLLED IN THE
19 CONSERVATION RESERVE PROGRAM.—

20 (1) ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY INCENTIVES
21 PROGRAM.—Section 1240B(d) of the Food Security
22 Act of 1985 (16 U.S.C. 3839aa–2(d)) is amended—

23 (A) in paragraph (6), by striking “A pro-
24 ducer” and inserting “Except as provided in
25 paragraph (8), a producer”; and

1 (B) by adding at the end the following:

2 “(8) COST-SHARE PAYMENTS FOR GRASSLAND
3 ENROLLED IN THE CONSERVATION RESERVE PRO-
4 GRAM.—

5 “(A) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary may
6 provide payments under the program for costs
7 associated with planning, design, materials,
8 equipment, installation, labor, management,
9 maintenance, or training with respect to eligible
10 land that is—

11 “(i) enrolled in the conservation re-
12 serve program under section
13 1231(d)(2)(A); and

14 “(ii) of ecological significance, as de-
15 scribed in section 1231(d)(2)(B)(iii).

16 “(B) LIMITATION.—A producer shall not
17 be eligible for payments under subparagraph
18 (A) for practices if the producer receives pay-
19 ments or other benefits for the same practice on
20 the same land under another Federal program
21 (other than the conservation reserve program
22 under subchapter B of chapter 1).”.

23 (2) CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM.—
24 Section 1240J(b) of the Food Security Act of 1985
25 (16 U.S.C. 3839aa–22(b)) is amended—

1 (A) in paragraph (1), in the matter pre-
2 ceding subparagraph (A), by inserting “and ex-
3 cept as provided in paragraph (3),” after
4 “paragraph (2),”; and

5 (B) by adding at the end the following:

6 “(3) COST-SHARE PAYMENTS FOR GRASSLAND
7 ENROLLED IN THE CONSERVATION RESERVE PRO-
8 GRAM.—

9 “(A) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary may
10 provide payments under the program for costs
11 associated with planning, design, materials,
12 equipment, installation, labor, management,
13 maintenance, or training with respect to eligible
14 land that is—

15 “(i) enrolled in the conservation re-
16 serve program under section
17 1231(d)(2)(A); and

18 “(ii) of ecological significance, as de-
19 scribed in section 1231(d)(2)(B)(iii).

20 “(B) LIMITATION.—A producer shall not
21 be eligible for payments under subparagraph
22 (A) for conservation activities if the producer
23 receives payments or other benefits for the
24 same conservation activities on the same land
25 under another Federal program (other than the

1 conservation reserve program under subchapter
2 B of chapter 1).

3 “(C) EMERGENCY GRAZING AND HAYING
4 ACCESS PRESERVED.—No priority resource con-
5 cern, practice, or incentive pertaining to res-
6 toration and enhancement of wildlife habitat
7 connectivity and wildlife migration corridors on
8 the acres described above will prevent or alter
9 emergency grazing and haying access for grass-
10 land acres enrolled in the conservation research
11 program.”.

12 (3) PAYMENT LIMITATION FOR RENTAL PAY-
13 MENTS UNDER THE CONSERVATION RESERVE PRO-
14 GRAM.—Section 1234(g)(1) of the Food Security
15 Act of 1985 (16 U.S.C. 3834(g)(1)) is amended by
16 striking “\$50,000” and inserting “\$125,000”.

17 (d) INCREASED PAYMENTS UNDER THE ENVIRON-
18 MENTAL QUALITY INCENTIVES PROGRAM.—Section
19 1240B(d) of the Food Security Act of 1985 (16 U.S.C.
20 3839aa-2(d)) is amended—

21 (1) in paragraph (3)(F), by inserting “and
22 wildlife habitat connectivity” before “; or”; and

23 (2) in paragraph (7)(A)—

24 (A) in clause (iii), by striking “or” at the
25 end;

1 (B) in clause (iv), by striking the period at
2 the end and inserting “; or”; and

3 (C) by adding at the end the following:

4 “(v) addresses the conservation and
5 restoration of wildlife habitat, including
6 wildlife habitat connectivity and wildlife
7 migration corridors.”.

8 (e) CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARDS.—Section
9 1242 of the Food Security Act of 1985 (16 U.S.C. 3842)
10 is amended by adding at the end the following:

11 “(j) ADDRESSING BARRIERS TO HABITAT
12 CONNECTIVITY.—

13 “(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall—

14 “(A) to the maximum extent practicable,
15 fully incorporate nonstructural methods to con-
16 trol livestock distribution, such as virtual fence-
17 ing, into the conservation practice standards;
18 and

19 “(B) provide for the appropriate range of
20 conservation practices and resource mitigation
21 measures available to landowners using non-
22 structural methods described in subparagraph
23 (A).

24 “(2) AVAILABILITY OF ADEQUATE TECHNICAL
25 ASSISTANCE.—The Secretary shall ensure that ade-

1 quate technical assistance is available for the imple-
2 mentation of—

3 “(A) nonstructural methods described in
4 paragraph (1)(A); and

5 “(B) other practices that support habitat
6 connectivity (as that term is defined in section
7 1240A) through Federal conservation pro-
8 grams.”.

9 (f) ADMINISTRATIVE REQUIREMENTS FOR CON-
10 SERVATION PROGRAMS.—Section 1244 of the Food Secu-
11 rity Act of 1985 (16 U.S.C. 3844) is amended by adding
12 at the end the following:

13 “(q) ENCOURAGEMENT OF HABITAT CONNECTIVITY
14 AND BIG GAME CORRIDORS.—In carrying out any con-
15 servation program administered by the Secretary, the Sec-
16 retary may, as appropriate, encourage—

17 “(1) the conservation of landscape corridors
18 and hydrologic connectivity, where native big game
19 species (as that term is defined in section 1240A)
20 and ecological processes can transition from one
21 habitat to another, in order to conserve native bio-
22 diversity and ensure resiliency against impacts from
23 a range of stressors; and

1 “(2) the use of conservation practices that sup-
2 port the development, restoration, and maintenance
3 of landscape corridors and hydrologic connectivity.”.

4 **SEC. 3. HIGH-PRIORITY RESEARCH AND EXTENSION AREAS.**

5 Section 1672(d) of the Food, Agriculture, Conserva-
6 tion, and Trade Act of 1990 (7 U.S.C. 5925(d)) is amend-
7 ed by adding at the end the following:

8 “(21) VIRTUAL FENCING.—Research and exten-
9 sion grants may be made under this section for the
10 purposes of—

11 “(A) understanding and addressing the
12 barriers to the adoption of virtual fencing tech-
13 nology; and

14 “(B) studying the effects of virtual fencing
15 technology on natural and cultural resources,
16 such as—

17 “(i) sensitive riparian areas; and

18 “(ii) crucial winter range and stopover
19 habitats for native big game species (as
20 that term is defined in section 1240A of
21 the Food Security Act of 1985 (16 U.S.C.
22 3839aa-1)).”.

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