

SUPPORT SB 1274

Topic: Strengthening interagency coordination and planning for wildlife movement corridors.

Patron: Senator David Marsden

Reasons to support SB 1274:

- 1) This bill builds on the efforts of the Wildlife Corridor Action Plan (WCAP) passed by the Virginia General Assembly in 2020. It seeks to make Virginia safer for both wildlife and citizens. It does this ensuring that wildlife corridors identified in the Wildlife Corridor Action Plan are integrated into the strategic planning documents of other agencies with activities that could impact wildlife movement and public safety.
- 2) Wildlife corridors are important because fragmentation is the single greatest threat to species, and this impacts Virginia citizens as well. Fragmentation by roads and a large deer population, make Virginia among the top ten states for deer/vehicle collisions every year, costing over \$533 million annually.
- 3) By prioritizing wildlife movement corridors and planning for them, we can help wildlife move safely through the landscape and reduce these collisions, saving both money and lives.
- 4) Protection of wildlife corridors is a growing trend, with bipartisan support, across the United States. Virginia showed leadership by joining this movement to protect Wildlife Corridors with the passage of the Wildlife Corridor Action Plan last year. SB 1274 helps ensure the best and most coordinated outcome of that plan.

Overview:

As wildlife move across land or through the water, they increasingly find their habitat shrinking or fragmented by human development. SB 1274 seeks to combat the decline of Virginia's natural ecosystems by helping wildlife move safely from one place to another. This bill will both protect wildlife and the public of Virginia.

To do this, SB 1274 builds on the Virginia Wildlife Corridor Action Plan (WCAP), which will compile and condense the best available science on the status of habitat connectivity in Virginia. The WCAP will assess the connections between core habitat areas, list potential projects to improve such connections, and provide an action plan for the completion of those projects.

SB 1274 directs DCR, VDOT, and the State Forester to integrate wildlife corridors identified in the WCAP into their own strategic planning guidance documents. This will help ensure that wildlife corridors are considered and protected across Virginia and across agency jurisdictions. This will allow agencies to best integrate wildlife connectivity, and the corresponding public safety considerations, into their existing operations.



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