

SUPPORT HB 2025 / SB 1341

Topic: Connecting Wildlife Habitats for Resilient Communities

Bill Patron: Delegate Gardner

OVERVIEW:

Requires the Wildlife Corridor Action Plan created by the Department of Wildlife Resources to address the financial needs of the Plan and implement certain additional initiatives. Establishes the Wildlife Corridor Grant Fund to provide grants for projects that preserve or enhance wildlife corridors prioritized by the Wildlife Corridor Action Plan. The bill directs the Department of Conservation and Recreation to include in the Virginia Flood Protection Master Plan a directive to encourage opportunities to incorporate wildlife-friendly design in flood resilience infrastructure where flood risk priorities align with priorities of the Wildlife Corridor Action Plan.

The bill requires the Department of Transportation to (i) establish and administer a program for the implementation of wildlife crossings of highways in the Commonwealth, (ii) incorporate the recommendations of the Wildlife Corridor Action Plan established by the Department of Wildlife Resources pursuant to existing law in the policies and procedures of the Department, and (iii) submit a report to the General Assembly in each even-numbered year regarding such program. The bill requires the Department of Transportation and the Commonwealth Transportation Board to include in all highway maintenance contracts a requirement for such contractor to identify certain data related to wildlife carcass removal and provides that such requirement may be accomplished by using the Department of Transportation's Wildlife Carcass Removal Tracking application.

REASONS TO SUPPORT:

- Virginia is top ten in the Nation for wildlife-vehicle conflict, and this bill enhances infrastructure resilience by addressing both wildlife movement and flood risks.
- Prevents waste of taxpayer dollars by incorporating multiple environmental factors in infrastructure planning from the beginning.
- Supports biodiversity by enabling aquatic and terrestrial species to safely navigate landscapes fragmented by roads and waterways.
- Provides a consistent financial framework to support wildlife crossings and corridor projects and prioritizes overburdened communities, promoting environmental justice and equitable resource allocation.
- Improves the accuracy and comprehensiveness of data to identify high-risk areas.



Wild Virginia
Jess Roberts, PhD, Director of Habitat
Connectivity
jessica@wildvirginia.org
(484) 356-5708



Wildlands Network

Wildlands Network
Misty Boos, U.S. Conservation Policy Manager
misty@wildlandsnetwork.org
(434) 906-9861



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NETWORK

Virginia Conservation Network
Pat Calvert, Director of Land Conservation &
Clean Water Programs
pat@vcnva.org
Pat: (434) 484-0804

This position was taken by Virginia Conservation Network (VCN)'s Legislative Committee and Board of Directors and is supported by Virginia's conservation community. For a complete list of VCN positions, visit www.vcnva.org/bill-tracker. VCN is committed to building a powerful, diverse, and highly-coordinated conservation movement focused on protecting our Commonwealth's natural resources today and for tomorrow.