

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
15 economic sectors; and

16 WHEREAS, Pennsylvania is a leader in outdoor recreation
17 consumer spending, a critical component of our tourism industry;
18 and

1 WHEREAS, Habitat connectivity for wildlife must be maintained
2 and expanded because connectivity between wildlife habitats is
3 important to the long-term viability of this Commonwealth's
4 biodiversity; and

5 WHEREAS, The ecological benefits of habitat connectivity
6 include greater species richness, increased species populations
7 and wider dispersal of animals and plants; and

8 WHEREAS, A habitat stronghold is a high-quality habitat where
9 wildlife populations are strong, diverse and highly functioning;
10 and

11 WHEREAS, The creation of high-quality habitat strongholds for
12 wildlife can lead to more genetically diverse and robust
13 populations; and

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

17 WHEREAS, Increasingly, fragmented habitats threaten this
18 Commonwealth's plant and wildlife species; and

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

24 WHEREAS, Different commissions and departments in the
25 Commonwealth manage conservation corridors in Pennsylvania; and

26 WHEREAS, Many State agencies, nonprofit organizations,
27 coalitions and public-private partnerships interested in
28 advancing habitat connectivity across this Commonwealth could
29 benefit from improved understanding of current and potential
30 conservation corridors and support each other in coordinating

1 information and joint land management; and

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

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

8 WHEREAS, It is essential that areas that provide safe
9 wildlife crossings be identified and utilized to prevent
10 wildlife vehicle collisions; and

11 WHEREAS, A study that identifies and evaluates conservation
12 corridors would be beneficial to both humans and wildlife;
13 therefore be it

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

18 RESOLVED, That the study:

19 (1) identifies and examines the approaches, statutes,
20 measures and management responsibilities of State agencies,
21 nongovernmental organizations and academic institutions to
22 assist in the identification and establishment of
23 conservation corridors in this Commonwealth;

24 (2) identifies existing and needed terrestrial and
25 aquatic conservation corridors in this Commonwealth by
26 synthesizing existing relevant plans and data sets, including
27 Geographic Information Systems spatial data, from
28 governmental agencies, nongovernmental organizations and
29 academic institutions;

30 (3) aggregates the existing economic impact analyses of

1 the establishment of conservation corridors in areas of high
2 incidence of wildlife-vehicle collisions;

3 (4) identifies best practices of corridor
4 identification, corridor implementation and support,
5 including public-private partnerships, interagency
6 coordination and conservation easements; and

7 (5) identifies financial mechanisms and options,
8 including those relevant to each agency and for the
9 Commonwealth as a whole, to fund conservation corridors,
10 including Federal, State and nongovernmental sources;

11 and be it further

12 RESOLVED, That the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee
13 consult with organizations that:

14 (1) have organizational missions and expertise in
15 wildlife habitat and ecological conservation;

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

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

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

22 (5) have knowledge of relevant issues;

23 and be it further

24 RESOLVED, That the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee
25 be authorized to consult with surrounding states and private
26 landowners that have knowledge of relevant issues; and be it
27 further

28 RESOLVED, That the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee
29 make recommendations to organizations, landowners and agencies
30 relevant to identified conservation corridors regarding

1 collaborative engagement for the management of these areas; and
2 be it further

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