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THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

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SENATE RESOLUTION

No. 70 Session of  
2021

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INTRODUCED BY MUTH, FONTANA, COMITTA AND SCHWANK, APRIL 13, 2021

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REFERRED TO ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES AND ENERGY, APRIL 13, 2021

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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, Outdoor recreation is among our nation's largest  
6 economic sectors; and

7 WHEREAS, Pennsylvania is a leader in outdoor recreation  
8 consumer spending, which is a critical component of our tourism  
9 industry; and

10 WHEREAS, Pennsylvania is home to an array of ecosystems with  
11 a magnificent diversity of plants, trees and wildlife that  
12 benefit from connectivity and the conservation of high quality  
13 habitats which enable species to thrive as the species face  
14 habitat stressors and changing environmental conditions; and

15 WHEREAS, Conservation of this Commonwealth's natural  
16 resources is necessary to prevent exploitation, destruction or  
17 neglect, and for this Commonwealth's tourism industry to  
18 continue to expand and thrive; and

19 WHEREAS, Pennsylvania ranks third in the country for

1 incidence of wildlife-vehicle collisions, which cost the  
2 Commonwealth millions in insurance damages and countless human  
3 lives; and

4 WHEREAS, Ensuring the safety of Pennsylvania highways is  
5 critical and identifying areas for safe wildlife crossings of  
6 transit highways can significantly reduce wildlife-vehicle  
7 collisions; and

8 WHEREAS, It is recognized as a public good that habitat  
9 connectivity for wildlife be maintained and expanded, as  
10 connectivity between wildlife habitats is important to the long-  
11 term viability of this Commonwealth's biodiversity; and

12 WHEREAS, The ecological benefits of habitat connectivity have  
13 been measured and greater species richness, including increased  
14 species populations and wider dispersal of animals and plants,  
15 and the creation of high-quality habitat strongholds for  
16 wildlife which can lead to more genetically diverse and robust  
17 populations; and

18 WHEREAS, Habitat connectivity can be fostered by conservation  
19 corridors; and

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

23 WHEREAS, Increasingly, fragmented habitats threaten this  
24 Commonwealth's plant and wildlife species; and

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

30 WHEREAS, Conservation corridors in Pennsylvania are managed

1 by different Commonwealth commissions and departments; and

2 WHEREAS, Many Commonwealth agencies, nonprofit organizations  
3 and coalitions, as well as public-private partnerships that are  
4 interested in advancing connectivity across this Commonwealth,  
5 could benefit from improved understanding of current and  
6 potential conservation corridors in this Commonwealth, as well  
7 as support in coordinating information and joint land management  
8 among the above actors; and

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

12 RESOLVED, That the Senate direct the Legislative Budget and  
13 Finance Committee to conduct a study and issue a report on the  
14 current status and management of conservation corridors in this  
15 Commonwealth and make recommendations for measures proposed or  
16 undertaken for the conservation and maintenance of these  
17 corridors; and be it further

18 RESOLVED, That the study:

19 (1) identify and examine the approaches, statutes,  
20 measures and management responsibilities of a Commonwealth  
21 agency, nongovernmental organization and academic institution  
22 to assist in the identification and establishment of  
23 conservation corridors in this Commonwealth;

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

29 (3) aggregate the existing economic impact analyses of  
30 the establishment of conservation corridors in areas of high

1 incidence of wildlife-vehicle collisions;

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

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

10 and be it further

11 RESOLVED, That the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee  
12 be authorized to consult with organizations that:

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

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

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

20 (4) collect data on vehicle collisions involving  
21 wildlife; 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 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 as appropriate regarding collaborative  
30 engagement for the management of these areas, and present the

1 recommendations to the relevant parties; and be it further  
2       RESOLVED, That the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee  
3 prepare a report of the findings and recommendations of the  
4 study and submit the report to the Secretary of the Senate and  
5 the Chief Clerk of the House of Representatives within 18 months  
6 of the adoption of this resolution and no later than October 31,  
7 2022.