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NEWS FROM THE U.S. SENATE & U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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WASHINGTON – U.S. Senator Tom Udall (D-N.M.), vice chairman of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, and U.S. Representative Ruben Gallego (D-Ariz.), chairman of the House Subcommittee on Indigenous Peoples, introduced the Tribal Wildlife Corridors Act of 2019 to support the use of wildlife corridors on Tribal lands.

The legislation is supported by **U.S. Representatives Ben Ray Luján (D-N.M.)** and **Deb Haaland (D-N.M.)**.

A United Nations report released earlier this year found that one million plant and animal species are facing extinction – and that habitat destruction caused by human activity is a key threat. By connecting similar pieces of land into stretches of habitat to allow migration, wildlife corridors can reverse the process of habitat loss and fragmentation, protecting migration routes and safeguarding species from the devastating impacts of a changing climate and habitat loss due to development.

“Our planet currently faces a mass extinction crisis,” **Udall said.** “Wildlife corridors, as effective tools for restoring native species populations, are the first step in addressing this crisis. This legislation, developed in consultation with Tribes, is designed to honor the federal trust responsibility to Indian Tribes by supporting Tribes’ work to coordinate wildlife management strategies with their federal partners across jurisdictional boundaries.”

“Indigenous communities have long led by example when it comes to responsible and effective stewardship of our land and wildlife. It is past time to ensure that Tribes have the resources they need to protect wildlife migration and habitats on Tribal land. That is why I am proud to join Senator Udall in introducing the Tribal

Wildlife Corridors Act of 2019 to reaffirm this key aspect of Tribal sovereignty and improve federal support and coordination for the creation and maintenance of wildlife corridors in Indian Country,” **said Gallego.**

“With the increasing impacts from the climate crisis on our ecosystems, wildlife corridors and migrating wildlife face unique challenges that threaten their existence. It’s critical that we address these challenges and support the efforts of Tribal communities to effectively manage wildlife and protect migration corridors. I’m proud to work with my colleagues and Tribal leaders to move this vital legislation forward and deliver results,” **said Assistant Speaker Luján.**

“The movement of wildlife contributes to the resilience of our air, land and water, but right now we’re facing growing problems protecting their natural migration patterns. By supporting tribes’ capabilities to protect wildlife and their migration corridors, which is part of our traditional way of life, we recognize their important role in wildlife management and also preserve vital wildlife habitats,” **said Haaland, co-chair of the Congressional Native American Caucus.**

The legislation is similar to Udall and **U.S. Representative Don Beyer’s (D-Va.) Wildlife Corridors Conservation Act of 2019.**

Specifically, the Tribal Wildlife Corridors Act of 2019 empowers Tribes to enhance native habitat connectivity on Tribal lands by:

- Requiring the U.S. Forest Service to consider opportunities to link Tribal Wildlife Corridors to U.S. Forest Service-managed lands;
- Requiring the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) to conduct meaningful consultation with Tribes administering a recognized Tribal Wildlife Corridor;
- Requiring DOI to provide technical assistance to Tribes to establish, manage, or expand a Tribal Wildlife Corridor;
- Prioritizing U.S. Department of Agriculture conservation projects that would enhance native species movement through the expansion of a Tribal Wildlife Corridor;
- Establishing a grant program to encourage native species movement; and
- Ensuring the authorized activities in the bill do not impact the use of private property or Tribal lands.

The bill implements recommendations from resolutions passed by the [Native American Fish & Wildlife Society](#) and the [Western Governors' Association](#), which call for increased support of Tribal efforts to identify and protect key wildlife migration corridors.

U.S. Senators Cory Booker (D-N.J.), Kamala Harris (D-Calif.), Richard Blumenthal (D-Conn.), Bernie Sanders (D-Vt.), Jon Tester (D-Mont.), Tina Smith (D-Minn.), and Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.) joined the bill as original cosponsors.

The full text of the legislation can be found [HERE](#).

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