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LEGISLATIVE ACTION

Senate

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House

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The Committee on Appropriations (Brodeur) recommended the following:

**Senate Amendment (with title amendment)**

Delete everything after the enacting clause  
and insert:

Section 1. Section 259.1055, Florida Statutes, is created  
to read:

259.1055 Florida wildlife corridor.—

(1) SHORT TITLE.—This section may be cited as the “The  
Florida Wildlife Corridor Act.”

(2) LEGISLATIVE FINDINGS.—The Legislature finds that this



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11 state's population is growing rapidly and that lands and waters  
12 that provide this state's green infrastructure and vital habitat  
13 for wide-ranging wildlife, such as the Florida panther, need to  
14 be preserved and protected. The Legislature further finds that  
15 the Florida wildlife corridor is an existing physical,  
16 geographically defined area consisting of more than 18 million  
17 acres of land, 10 million of which are conservation lands.

18 (3) PURPOSE.—The purpose of this act, and of the Florida  
19 wildlife corridor itself, is to create incentives for  
20 conservation and sustainable development while sustaining and  
21 conserving the green infrastructure that is the foundation of  
22 this state's economy and quality of life by doing all of the  
23 following:

24 (a) Maintaining wildlife access to the habitats needed to  
25 allow for migration of and genetic exchange amongst regional  
26 wildlife populations.

27 (b) Preventing fragmentation of wildlife habitats.

28 (c) Protecting the headwaters of major watersheds,  
29 including the Everglades and the St. Johns River.

30 (d) Providing ecological connectivity of the lands needed  
31 for flood and sea-level rise resiliency and large-scale  
32 ecosystem functions, such as water management and prescribed  
33 burns essential for land management and restoration.

34 (e) Preserving and protecting land and waters that are not  
35 only vital to wildlife but are critical to this state's  
36 groundwater recharge and that serve as watersheds that provide  
37 drinking water to most Floridians and help maintain the health  
38 of downstream coastal estuaries.

39 (f) Providing for wildlife crossings for the protection and



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40 safety of wildlife and the traveling public.

41 (g) Helping to sustain this state's working ranches, farms,  
42 and forests that provide compatible wildlife habitats while  
43 sustaining rural prosperity and agricultural production.

44 (4) DEFINITIONS.—As used in this section, the term:

45 (a) "Conserved lands" means federal, state, or local lands  
46 owned or managed for conservation purposes, including, but not  
47 limited to, federal, state, and local parks; federal and state  
48 forests; wildlife management areas; wildlife refuges; military  
49 bases and airports with conservation lands; properties owned by  
50 land trusts and managed for conservation; and privately owned  
51 land with a conservation easement, including, but not limited  
52 to, ranches, forestry operations, and groves.

53 (b) "Department" means the Department of Environmental  
54 Protection.

55 (c) "Florida Ecological Greenways Network" is a  
56 periodically updated model developed to delineate large  
57 connected areas of statewide ecological significance.

58 (d) "Florida wildlife corridor" means the conserved lands  
59 and opportunity areas defined by the department as priority one,  
60 two, and three categories of the Florida Ecological Greenways  
61 Network.

62 (e) "Opportunity area" means those lands and waters within  
63 the Florida wildlife corridor which are not conserved lands and  
64 the green spaces within the Florida wildlife corridor which lack  
65 conservation status, are contiguous to or between conserved  
66 lands, and provide an opportunity to develop the Florida  
67 wildlife corridor into a statewide conservation network.

68 (f) "Wildlife" has the same meaning as in Article II of the



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69 Wildlife Violator Compact Act, s. 379.2255.

70 (g) "Wildlife corridor" means a network of connected  
71 wildlife habitats required for the long-term survival of and  
72 genetic exchange amongst regional wildlife populations which  
73 serves to prevent fragmentation by providing ecological  
74 connectivity of the lands needed to furnish adequate habitats  
75 and allow safe movement and dispersal.

76 (h) "Wildlife crossing" means a landscape design element  
77 that connects two or more patches of wildlife habitat and that  
78 is meant to function as a safe conduit for wildlife over or  
79 beneath roads, waters, and other barriers to wildlife movement  
80 and that is designed to protect Florida panther and other  
81 critical wildlife habitat corridor connections and to reduce  
82 motor vehicle collisions with wildlife, reduce the likelihood of  
83 injuries and mortalities to humans and wildlife from such  
84 collisions, and to reduce the potential for damage to motor  
85 vehicles from such collisions.

86 (5) DUTIES OF THE DEPARTMENT.—The department shall:

87 (a) Encourage all state, regional, and local agencies that  
88 acquire lands, including, but not limited to, the Fish and  
89 Wildlife Conservation Commission and the Department of  
90 Transportation, to include in their land-buying efforts the  
91 acquisition of sufficient legal interest in opportunity areas to  
92 ensure the continued viability of the Florida wildlife corridor.

93 (b) Encourage investment in conservation easements  
94 voluntarily entered into by private landowners to conserve  
95 opportunity areas.

96 (c) Encourage state land-buying agencies and state land  
97 management agencies to consider the conservation of opportunity



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98 areas as a multi-phased project for the purpose of listing,  
99 acquisition, and management.

100 (d) Consider the inclusion of private funds to supplement  
101 the state's contribution in its efforts to acquire a fee or  
102 less-than-fee interest in lands that contain recognized  
103 opportunity areas and conserved lands in the Florida wildlife  
104 corridor.

105 (e) Seek opportunities to attract new sources of federal  
106 funding and to strengthen existing programs to protect and  
107 conserve the Florida wildlife corridor.

108 (f) Encourage private landowners, through existing and  
109 future incentives and liability protections, to continue to  
110 allow their private property to be used for the preservation and  
111 enhancement of the Florida wildlife corridor.

112 (g) Encourage new approaches and novel financing mechanisms  
113 for long-term protection of the Florida wildlife corridor,  
114 including, but not limited to, public-private partnerships;  
115 payments for ecosystem services; blended financing for growth,  
116 resilience, and green infrastructure; and support for the  
117 sustainable growth of agriculture.

118 (h) Encourage state and local agencies with economic and  
119 ecotourism development responsibilities to recognize the  
120 importance of the Florida wildlife corridor in encouraging  
121 public access to wildlife areas and bringing nature-based  
122 tourism to local communities and to support acquisition and  
123 development activities for preservation and enhancement of the  
124 Florida wildlife corridor.

125 (i) Encourage private investment in ecotourism focused on  
126 the Florida wildlife corridor.



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127 (j) Encourage the protection, preservation, and enhancement  
128 of the natural value of the Florida wildlife corridor for  
129 current and future residents of this state.

130 (6) RESTRICTIONS.—A local or state governmental entity may  
131 not restrict proposed future activities on private properties  
132 designated within the Florida wildlife corridor boundaries based  
133 upon the property's inclusion in the Florida wildlife corridor  
134 area.

135 Section 2. (1) The St. Johns River Water Management  
136 District, in consultation with the Department of Environmental  
137 Protection, Seminole County, the Fish and Wildlife Conservation  
138 Commission, and the Department of Transportation, shall issue a  
139 report by December 31, 2021, that includes information and  
140 updates regarding the implementation of recommendations from the  
141 Little Wekiva Watershed Management Plan Final Report dated  
142 November 2005. The report must include, but not be limited to,  
143 the following information: a description of all projects or  
144 recommendations included in the report that have been  
145 implemented and their completion dates, an analysis of how the  
146 projects or recommendations achieved the results included in the  
147 report, an analysis of costs for ongoing operation and  
148 maintenance of the constructed projects completed, a list of  
149 permit violations which may have contributed to sediment buildup  
150 north of S.R. 436, an analysis of any new projects that may  
151 benefit the watershed, and recommendations and cost estimates  
152 for future studies or projects that may be necessary to identify  
153 new or potentially significant contributors of sediment  
154 accumulation in the Little Wekiva River.

155 (2) (a) The Department of Environmental Protection and the



156 water management district shall immediately review, with the  
157 goal of identifying significant contributors of sediment  
158 accumulation, any permits which the water management district  
159 has determined may have contributed to sediment buildup north of  
160 S.R. 436 to assess whether the permittee is in violation of any  
161 permit conditions. Appropriate action to resolve compliance  
162 issues shall be undertaken pursuant to chapter 373 if the  
163 department or the water management district discovers a  
164 violation of any permit condition.

165 (b) As part of the review, the Department of Environmental  
166 Protection and the water management district shall review known  
167 violations of such permits since 2018, and attempt to determine,  
168 using existing information, what effects such violations may  
169 have had on sediment accumulation in the Little Wekiva River.

170 Section 3. This act shall take effect July 1, 2021.

171  
172 ===== T I T L E A M E N D M E N T =====

173 And the title is amended as follows:

174 Delete everything before the enacting clause  
175 and insert:

176 A bill to be entitled

177 An act relating to the protection of ecological systems;  
178 creating s. 259.1055, F.S.; providing a short title; providing  
179 legislative findings and a purpose for the Florida Wildlife  
180 Corridor Act; defining terms; requiring the Department of  
181 Environmental Protection to take certain actions to support the  
182 Florida wildlife corridor; prohibiting proposed future  
183 activities on private properties within the Florida wildlife  
184 corridor from being restricted by local or state governmental



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185 entities; requiring the St. Johns River Water Management  
186 District, in consultation with the Department of Environmental  
187 Protection, Seminole County, the Fish and Wildlife Conservation  
188 Commission, and the Department of Transportation, to issue a  
189 report that includes information and updates regarding the  
190 implementation of recommendations from the Little Wekiva  
191 Watershed Management Plan Final Report dated November 2005 by a  
192 specified date; requiring the Department of Environmental  
193 Protection and the water management district to review certain  
194 permits along the Little Wekiva River; requiring certain  
195 enforcement actions to be taken against noncompliant permittees;  
196 providing an effective date.