

By Senator Brodeur

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Senate Resolution

A resolution reaffirming the importance of the Florida Wildlife Corridor and its significant environmental, cultural, economic, and tourism value as a unique natural resource, and recognizing February 12, 2024, as "Florida Wildlife Corridor Day."

WHEREAS, the Florida Wildlife Corridor, recognized in the Florida Wildlife Corridor Act of 2021, establishes a geographic area of more than 18 million acres of land, 10 million acres of which are current public conservation lands that could be permanently disconnected from each other without additional conservation of the nearly 8 million acres of opportunity areas connecting them, and

WHEREAS, the purpose of defining the Florida Wildlife Corridor is to create incentives for conservation and sustainable development while preserving the green infrastructure that is the foundation of this state's economy and quality of life, and

WHEREAS, the nearly 8 million acres of opportunity areas still needing protection consist largely of working ranches, farms, and forests, and the majority of this acreage can be protected through conservation easements with willing landowners, thereby supporting the state's agricultural economy and enhancing the tourism value of Florida's heartland, and

WHEREAS, since July 2021, more than 160,000 acres of land in the Florida Wildlife Corridor have been approved for protection by Governor Ron DeSantis and the Florida Cabinet, including Commissioner of Agriculture Wilton Simpson, who made

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30 the corridor a priority during his term as Senate President,  
31 with funding appropriated by the Legislature from the Department  
32 of Environmental Protection's Florida Forever Program and the  
33 Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services's Rural and  
34 Family Lands Protection Program, and

35 WHEREAS, a number of federal and local programs have  
36 increased their investment in Florida conservation, following  
37 the leadership of the state in prioritizing the framework of the  
38 Florida Wildlife Corridor, and

39 WHEREAS, these programs share the state's goal of  
40 protecting an additional 800,000 acres in the Florida Wildlife  
41 Corridor by 2030, balancing this commitment to conservation with  
42 the need for development to accommodate the more than 2 million  
43 new residents projected to move to this state during the next 6  
44 years, and

45 WHEREAS, public access to the Florida Wildlife Corridor was  
46 greatly expanded in 2023 with the Legislature passing, and  
47 Governor DeSantis signing, legislation that connects the  
48 corridor to the Florida Greenways and Trails System and the  
49 Florida Shared-Use Nonmotorized (SUN) Trail Network, as well as  
50 additional pathways to heritage small towns throughout this  
51 state, and

52 WHEREAS, with the state's funding commitment in recent  
53 years to such projects, the Department of Environmental  
54 Protection and the Department of Transportation have coordinated  
55 the establishment of multiuse trails, including the investment  
56 in the planning, design, and construction of the SUN Trail  
57 Network and the campaign to recognize various communities as  
58 "Trail Towns," in conjunction with Visit Florida's promotion of

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59 trail-based tourism, and

60 WHEREAS, this connecting of trails with the Florida  
61 Wildlife Corridor creates a means not only to preserve many  
62 natural areas, but also to provide expanded access for  
63 Floridians and visitors to hike, run, and bike between trail  
64 destinations and see firsthand this state's unique natural  
65 habitat and picturesque small towns, NOW, THEREFORE,

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67 Be It Resolved by the Senate of the State of Florida:

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69 That the Senate reaffirms the importance of the Florida  
70 Wildlife Corridor and its significant environmental, cultural,  
71 economic, and tourism value as a unique natural resource, and  
72 recognizes February 12, 2024, as "Florida Wildlife Corridor  
73 Day."