

SB 592 - AS INTRODUCED

2026 SESSION

26-2174

08/05

SENATE BILL **592**

AN ACT enabling regional, conservation, and energy resource planning for habitat strongholds and wildlife corridors.

SPONSORS: Sen. Watters, Dist 4; Sen. Rosenwald, Dist 13; Sen. Birdsell, Dist 19; Sen. Avard, Dist 12; Sen. Perkins Kwoka, Dist 21; Sen. Altschiller, Dist 24; Rep. C. Harvey, Ches. 6; Rep. Bixby, Straf. 13; Rep. Ouellet, Coos 3

COMMITTEE: Energy and Natural Resources

ANALYSIS

This bill enables regional, conservation, and energy resource planning for habitat strongholds and wildlife corridors.

Explanation: Matter added to current law appears in ***bold italics***.
Matter removed from current law appears ~~[in brackets and struckthrough.]~~
Matter which is either (a) all new or (b) repealed and reenacted appears in regular type.

STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

In the Year of Our Lord Two Thousand Twenty-Six

AN ACT enabling regional, conservation, and energy resource planning for habitat strongholds and wildlife corridors.

Be it Enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court convened:

1 1 Conservation Commission; Habitat Strongholds and Wildlife Corridors Included. Amend RSA
2 36-A:2 to read as follows:

3 36-A:2 Conservation Commission. A city or town which accepts the provisions of this chapter
4 may establish a conservation commission, hereinafter called the commission, for the proper
5 utilization and protection of the natural resources and for the protection of watershed resources of
6 said city or town. Such commission shall conduct researches into its local land and water areas and
7 shall seek to coordinate the activities of unofficial bodies organized for similar purposes, and may
8 advertise, prepare, print and distribute books, maps, charts, plans and pamphlets which in its
9 judgment it deems necessary for its work. It shall keep an index of all open space and natural,
10 aesthetic or ecological areas, **including habitat strongholds as defined in RSA 207:1, XIII-a**
11 **and wildlife corridors as defined in RSA 207:1, XXXVI**, within the city or town, as the case may
12 be, with the plan of obtaining information pertinent to proper utilization of such areas, including
13 lands owned by the state or lands owned by a town or city. It shall keep an index of all marshlands,
14 swamps and all other wet lands in a like manner, and may recommend to the city council or
15 selectmen or to the department of natural and cultural resources a program for the protection,
16 development or better utilization of all such areas. It shall keep accurate records of its meetings and
17 actions and shall file an annual report which shall be printed in the annual town or municipal
18 report. The commission may appoint such clerks and other employees or subcommittees as it may
19 from time to time require.

20 2 Purposes; Habitat Strongholds and Wildlife Corridors Included. Amend RSA 36:45 to read as
21 follows:

22 36:45 Purposes. The purpose of this subdivision shall be to enable municipalities and counties
23 to join in the formation of regional planning commissions whose duty it shall be to prepare a
24 coordinated plan for the development of a region, taking into account present and future needs with
25 a view toward encouraging the most appropriate use of land, such as for agriculture, forestry,
26 **conservation, including habitat strongholds as defined in RSA 207:1, XIII-a and wildlife**
27 **corridors as defined in RSA 207:1, XXXVI**, industry, commerce, and housing; the facilitation of
28 transportation and communication; the proper and economic location of public utilities and services;
29 the development of adequate recreational areas; the promotion of good civic design; and the wise and
30 efficient expenditure of public funds. The aforesaid plan shall be made in order to promote the

1 health, safety, morals and general welfare of the region and its inhabitants. To promote these
2 purposes the office of planning and development shall delineate planning regions for the state so
3 that each municipality of the state will fall within a delineated region and shall have the opportunity
4 of forming or joining the regional planning commission for that planning region. In determining
5 these regions the office shall consider such factors as community of interest and homogeneity,
6 existing metropolitan and regional planning agencies, patterns of communication and
7 transportation, geographic features and natural boundaries, extent of urban development, relevancy
8 of the region for provision of governmental services and functions and its use for administering state
9 and federal programs, the existence of physical, social and economic problems of a regional
10 character, and other related characteristics. To accommodate changing conditions, the office may
11 adjust the boundaries of the planning regions, after consultation with the respective regional
12 planning commissions.

13 3 Regional Planning Commission; Powers and Duties; Habitat Strongholds and Wildlife
14 Corridors Included. Amend RSA 36:47, I to read as follows:

15 I. A regional planning commission's powers shall be advisory, and shall generally pertain to
16 the development of the region within its jurisdiction as a whole. Nothing in this subdivision shall be
17 deemed to reduce or limit any of the powers, duties or obligations of planning boards in individual
18 municipalities. The area of jurisdiction of a regional planning commission shall include the areas of
19 the respective municipalities within the delineated planning region. It shall be the duty of a
20 regional planning commission to prepare a comprehensive master plan for the development of the
21 region within its jurisdiction, including the commission's recommendations, among other things, for
22 the use *and conservation* of land within the region; for the general location, extent, type of use,
23 and character of highways, major streets, intersections, parking lots, railroads, aircraft landing
24 areas, waterways and bridges, and other means of transportation, communication, and other
25 purposes; for the development, extent, and general location of parks, playgrounds, shore front
26 developments, parkways, and other public reservations and recreation areas, *land conservation*
27 *areas, including habitat strongholds as defined in RSA 207:1, XIII-a and wildlife corridors*
28 *as defined in RSA 207:1, XXXVI*; for the location, type, and character of public buildings, schools,
29 community centers, and other public property; and for the improvement, redevelopment,
30 rehabilitation, or conservation of residential, business, industrial and other areas; including the
31 development of programs for the modernization and coordination of buildings, housing, zoning and
32 subdivision regulations of municipalities and their enforcement on a coordinated and unified basis.
33 A regional planning commission may authorize its employees or consultants to render assistance on
34 local planning problems to any municipality or county which is not a member of said regional
35 planning commission. The cost of such assistance shall be paid entirely by the municipality or
36 county to which the service is rendered or partly by said municipality or county and partly by any
37 gift, grant, or contribution which may be available for such work or by combination thereof. Said

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1 commission shall keep a strict account of the cost of such assistance and shall provide such
2 municipality or county with an itemized statement.

3 4 New Paragraph; Development of Regional Impact; Habitat Strongholds and Wildlife Corridors
4 Included. Amend RSA 36:55 by inserting after paragraph VI the following new paragraph:

5 VII. Conservation, including habitat strongholds as defined in RSA 207:1, XIII-a and wildlife
6 corridors as defined in RSA 207:1, XXXVI.

7 5 New Paragraph; Executive Director Fish and Game Commission; Consultations Regarding
8 Habitat Strongholds and Wildlife Corridors. Amend RSA 206:10 by inserting after paragraph IV the
9 following new paragraph:

10 V. The executive director of the fish and game commission shall:

11 (a) Consult with regional planning commissions, conservation commissions, and the
12 department of transportation concerning habitat strongholds as defined in RSA 207:1, XIII-a and
13 wildlife corridors as defined in RSA 207:1, XXXVI.

14 (b) Consult with the department of energy and the department of environmental
15 services on potential designation of approved transmission corridors and large-scale solar projects as
16 habitat strongholds as defined in RSA 243:3, III-a and wildlife corridors as defined in RSA 207:1,
17 XXXVI, subject to agreement of the property owners.

18 6 Effective Date. This act shall take effect 60 days after its passage.