



New Hampshire Association of Conservation Commissions

SERVING NEW HAMPSHIRE'S COMMUNITIES SINCE 1970

TO: House Resources, Recreation and Development Committee
FROM: Barbara Richter, NHACC Executive Director
DATE: March 24, 2026
SUBJECT: Written testimony regarding SB592

Thank you, members of the committee for the opportunity to comment on Senate bill 592. Please vote **yes to help protect New Hampshire's Wildlife**. The original bill would help coordinate state, regional and local efforts to prioritize wildlife corridors that support critical habitat. However, we do not support the Senate amendment.

We ask that you remove the amended section: “*The inventory of habitat strongholds and wildlife corridors is intended for informational purposes for regional planning commissions and shall not be utilized as the basis for municipal zoning or planning purposes.*” from Senate Bill 592. The original bill language encouraged cooperation between state, regional and local efforts to establish and protect wildlife corridors. We recommend you support this goal.

We have concerns about the amendment the Senate committee added. It would prohibit municipalities from using the relevant data to establish local zoning. Identifying natural resources is the first step in protecting these critical areas. Establishing local zoning based on scientific research should be an option for towns that want to protect environmentally sensitive areas and promotes open space for the public and wildlife.

Establishing wildlife corridors is essential in protecting New Hampshire's native wildlife. Allowing species to move between unfragmented natural areas is critical to the survival of many of our iconic mammals including, bear, moose and bobcat. The effects of lost natural resources through forest fragmentation results in the loss of habitat and recreational areas. Fragmentation of natural areas can also contribute to the contamination of ground and surface waters, and increased erosion and flooding.

The New Hampshire State Wildlife Action Plan recommends the protection of wildlife corridors as a critical goal in Chapter 5. **Goal 3.2: Maintain And Enhance Landscape Connectivity to Support Wildlife Movement**. To help achieve this goal, NH Fish & Game created an online [NH Wildlife Corridors Map](#). This information is easily accessible and the map provides data to help

identify potential corridors that connect core areas of wildlife habitat and establish connectivity zones for areas of protection and restoration.

RSA 36-A has required commissions to identify local natural resources since 1963. This is the logical starting point for protecting and ensuring proper use of local natural resources. In order to protect local natural resources, a commission must **identify, map, and describe where on the landscape they currently exist**. Natural resources can be defined as critical resources supplied by nature that are irreplaceable or very expensive to replace if used up or destroyed. Examples of natural resources include soils, wetlands, habitats, water, plants, and wildlife. It is important to identify these resources for the health and safety of New Hampshire residents.

Please remove the amendment that limits local zoning and pass the bill without these restrictions. The Senate amendment will prevent municipalities from protecting valuable wildlife corridors and habitat through local zoning. It is important for towns to establish zoning based on current science and data. The decision to establish zoning should be made by each community, and not dictated by the State.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara Richter,
NHACC Executive Director

The NH Association of Conservation Commissions (NHACC) is a nonprofit organization which serves the 217 municipal conservation commissions in the state. Our mission is to foster conservation and appropriate use of New Hampshire's natural resources by providing assistance to conservation commissions, facilitating communication and cooperation among commissions, and helping to create a climate in which commissions can be successful.