

**ASSEMBLY BILL**

**No. 498**

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**Introduced by Assembly Member Levine**

February 23, 2015

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An act to amend Sections 1930 and 1930.5 of the Fish and Game Code, relating to fish and wildlife.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 498, as introduced, Levine. Wildlife conservation: wildlife corridors.

Existing law requires the Department of Fish and Wildlife to administer the Significant Natural Areas Program, and requires the department, among other things, to develop and maintain a spatial data system that identifies those areas in the state that are most essential for maintaining habitat connectivity, including wildlife corridors and habitat linkages. Existing law requires the department, contingent upon the provision of certain funding, to investigate, study, and identify those areas in the state that are most essential as wildlife corridors and habitat linkages and prioritize vegetative data development in those areas. Existing law requires the department to seek input from representatives of other state agencies, local government, federal agencies, nongovernmental conservation organizations, landowners, agriculture, recreation, scientific entities, and industry in determining essential wildlife corridors and habitat linkages.

This bill would declare that it is the policy of the state and all state agencies, with regard to a project proposed in an area identified as a wildlife corridor, to encourage the project proponent to consult with the department, and, wherever feasible and practicable, take steps to

protect or restore the functioning of the wildlife corridor through various means, as applicable.

Vote: majority. Appropriation: no. Fiscal committee: yes.  
 State-mandated local program: no.

*The people of the State of California do enact as follows:*

- 1 SECTION 1. Section 1930 of the Fish and Game Code is
- 2 amended to read:
- 3 1930. The Legislature finds and declares that:
- 4 (a) Areas containing diverse ecological and geological
- 5 characteristics are vital to the continual health and well being of
- 6 the state’s natural resources and of its citizens.
- 7 (b) Many habitats and ecosystems that constitute the state’s
- 8 natural diversity are in danger of being lost.
- 9 (c) Connectivity between wildlife habitats is important to the
- 10 long-term viability of the state’s biodiversity.
- 11 (d) Increasingly fragmented habitats threaten the state’s wildlife
- 12 species.
- 13 (e) There is insufficient incentive for private landowners to
- 14 maintain and perpetuate significant local natural areas in their
- 15 natural state.
- 16 (f) Efforts to preserve natural areas have been fragmented
- 17 between federal, state, local, and private sectors.
- 18 (g) Analysis of the state’s habitat connectivity benefits from the
- 19 consideration of all relevant data, including information from
- 20 private and public landowners.
- 21 (h) ~~The Department of Fish and Game’s~~ *department’s* existing
- 22 mapping activities and products should be developed and sustained.
- 23 (i) *The importance of wildlife corridors to assist in adapting to*
- 24 *climate change has been recognized by such groups as the Western*
- 25 *Governor’s Association, which unanimously approved a policy to*
- 26 *protect wildlife migration corridors and crucial wildlife habitat*
- 27 *in 2007. Individual local, state, and federal agencies have also*
- 28 *adopted policies aimed at protecting wildlife corridors and*
- 29 *restoring habitat connectivity, in order to protect ecosystem health*
- 30 *and biodiversity and to improve the resiliency of wildlife and their*
- 31 *habitats to climate change. However, these efforts could be*
- 32 *enhanced through establishment of a statewide policy to protect*

1 *and restore important wildlife corridors and habitat linkages where*  
2 *feasible.*

3 SEC. 2. Section 1930.5 of the Fish and Game Code is amended  
4 to read:

5 1930.5. (a) Contingent upon funding being provided by the  
6 Wildlife Conservation Board from moneys available pursuant to  
7 Section 75055 of the Public Resources Code, or from other  
8 appropriate bond funds, upon appropriation by the Legislature, the  
9 department shall investigate, study, and identify those areas in the  
10 state that are most essential as wildlife corridors and habitat  
11 linkages, as well as the impacts to those *wildlife* corridors from  
12 climate change, and shall prioritize vegetative data development  
13 in these areas.

14 (b) It is the intent of the Legislature that the Wildlife  
15 Conservation Board use various funds to work with the department  
16 to complete a statewide analysis of *wildlife* corridors and  
17 connectivity to support conservation planning and climate change  
18 adaptation activities.

19 (c) *It is the policy of the state to promote the protection of*  
20 *wildlife corridors and habitat linkages in order to enhance the*  
21 *resiliency of wildlife and their habitats to climate change, protect*  
22 *biodiversity, and allow for the migration and movement of species*  
23 *by providing connectivity between habitat lands. In order to further*  
24 *these goals, it is the policy of the state and all state agencies, with*  
25 *regard to a project proposed in an area identified as a wildlife*  
26 *corridor, to encourage the project proponent to consult with the*  
27 *department, and, wherever feasible and practicable, take steps to*  
28 *protect or restore the functioning of the wildlife corridor through*  
29 *various means, as applicable. Those means may include, but are*  
30 *not necessarily limited to, acquisition or protection of wildlife*  
31 *corridors as open space through conservation easements, installing*  
32 *of wildlife friendly fencing, and provision of roadway*  
33 *undercrossings and oversized culverts and bridges to allow for*  
34 *movement of wildlife between habitat areas, as applicable.*

35 (d) *For purposes of this chapter, “wildlife corridor” means a*  
36 *habitat linkage that joins two or more areas of wildlife habitat,*  
37 *allowing for the movement of wildlife from one area to another.*

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