

**File Code:** 2600**Date:** August 19, 2022**Route To:****Subject:** Habitat Connectivity and Migration Corridors in National Forest System Planning and Decisions**To:** Regional Foresters

The Forest Service recognizes the importance of National Forest System lands to a wide array of species that depend on them for seasonal habitats, habitat connectivity, migration corridors, spawning habitats, and wetlands. In recognition of this fact, the Forest Service included explicit requirements for evaluating, maintaining, or restoring ecological connectivity in its 2012 Planning Rule.

Since 2018, the Forest Service has taken a collaborative approach to researching, planning, and managing ecological resources in big-game winter range and migration routes in cooperation with multiple Federal, State, and non-governmental partners. This includes partnering with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's (NFWF) [Improving Habitat Quality in Western Big Game and Migration Corridors Program](#). Earlier this year, the Forest Service joined other agencies in support of the NFWF-led [America the Beautiful Challenge](#), a public-private grant program for locally led ecosystem restoration projects that invest in watershed restoration, resilience, equitable access, workforce development, corridors and connectivity, and collaborative conservation, consistent with the [America the Beautiful Initiative](#). Finally, the 2022 Forest Service Climate Adaptation Plan identifies protection of movement corridors and improvement of connectivity as key adaptation activities (*FS Climate Adaptation Plan*).

The ongoing Forest Service recognition of the importance of ecological connectivity and migration corridors is aligned with Biden-Harris administration priorities, like the [America the Beautiful Initiative](#). These priorities include partnerships with States, Tribes, local communities, and willing private landowners to improve and connect wildlife habitats, enhance migratory corridors, and support the full diversity of wildlife in America (*Year One Report - America the Beautiful*). In accordance with administration priorities, Agriculture Secretary Thomas J. Vilsack has directed agencies to leverage cross-jurisdictional partnerships and programs to foster increased biodiversity, enable wildlife migration, and enhance habitat integrity and resilience ([Sec Memo 1077](#)).

As the Agency considers policy options for conserving habitat connectivity and migration corridors, National Forest System units and Regions are asked to:

- Consider the impacts of Agency actions on ecological connectivity and wildlife corridors during broad-scale planning associated with the land management planning process and implementation of land management plans through localized project planning and decision-making.



- Integrate connectivity/corridor considerations into existing Forest Service programs and activities such as Shared Stewardship, vegetation management, legacy roads and trails investments, travel management planning, and Land and Water Conservation Fund acquisitions and easements.
- Seek opportunities to enhance migration corridor conservation and connectivity in our national forest system management and collaborations with States, Tribes, private landowners, local governments, non-governmental organizations, and other Federal agencies.
- Continue to look for opportunities to share and leverage knowledge, funding, technical expertise, and other resources to enhance migration corridor conservation in our partnerships
- Work with tribes on wildlife considerations in support of Joint Secretarial order 3403 and our National Tribal Relations Plan.



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