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HOUSE BILL NO. 596

Offered January 14, 2026

Prefiled January 13, 2026

A BILL to amend the Code of Virginia by adding in Article 8 of Chapter 5 of Title 29.1 a section numbered 29.1-580, relating to Wildlife Corridor Action Plan; interagency implementation group; report.

Patron—Simonds

Committee Referral Pending

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That the Code of Virginia is amended by adding in Article 8 of Chapter 5 of Title 29.1 a section numbered 29.1-580 as follows:

§ 29.1-580. Establishment of Interagency Implementation Group; report.

A. The Secretary of Natural and Historic Resources, in coordination with the Secretary of Transportation, shall convene an Interagency Implementation Group (the Group) to advance projects, policies, and priorities identified under the Plan. The Group shall consist of representatives of the Department of Transportation, Department of Wildlife Resources, other relevant state agencies, federally recognized tribes, and the Virginia Safe Wildlife Corridors Collaborative. The Group shall:

1. *Facilitate the development of a statewide memorandum of understanding among participating state agencies to formalize roles, data-sharing practices, and collaborative processes, including wildlife crossing project planning, development, and design;*

2. Facilitate sharing of wildlife vehicle collision data, including communications to localities and regional planning organizations;

3. Support local level connectivity planning by providing guidance, mapping, and data that reflect local needs;

4. Develop and offer training for state agencies, localities, and metropolitan planning organizations on

the benefits, cost-effectiveness, and implementation of wildlife crossings and habitat connectivity strategies;

5. Coordinate and prioritize implementation of projects identified in the Plan to ensure alignment across

6. Assist state agencies and political subdivisions, and by request any federal agency, in considering and

incorporating, where applicable, wildlife corridors and the recommendations of the Plan when developing any governmental strategic plan, map, or action.

B. The Secretary of Transportation and the Secretary of Natural and Historic Resources shall jointly submit a report of the Group's progress in advancing the Plan to the Chairs of the Senate Committees on Agriculture, Conservation and Natural Resources and Transportation and the House Committees on Agriculture, Chesapeake and Natural Resources and Transportation by September 1 of each year.

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