By: Cook of Harris S.B. No. 360

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to a wildlife corridor action plan developed by the Parks and Wildlife Department and certain other duties of the department relating to wildlife corridors.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

SECTION 1. Chapter 12, Parks and Wildlife Code, is amended by adding Subchapter I to read as follows:

SUBCHAPTER I. WILDLIFE CORRIDORS

Sec. 12.801. DEFINITIONS. In this subchapter:

(1) "Plan" means the wildlife corridor action plan developed under this subchapter.

(2) "Wildlife corridor" means a designated area that connects wildlife populations and habitats that would otherwise be separated by human activities or structures.

Sec. 12.802. WILDLIFE CORRIDOR ACTION PLAN. (a) The department, in consultation with the Texas Department of Transportation, shall develop a wildlife corridor action plan that recommends and prioritizes wildlife crossing projects intended to promote driver safety and wildlife connectivity.

(b) In developing the plan, the department shall use the best available science and department surveys to identify, list, and describe:

(1) wildlife corridors;

(2) existing and planned barriers to wildlife movement

along wildlife corridors;

(3) areas with a high risk of vehicle collisions with wildlife;

(4) habitats that are:

(A) of high quality for priority species and ecosystem health;

(B) occupied by rare or at-risk species; or

(C) designated as critical habitat under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 U.S.C. Section 1531 et seq.);

(5) migration routes of native, game, and migratory species; and

(6) land containing a high prevalence of existing human barriers to wildlife corridors, including roads, dams, power lines, and pipelines.

(c) The plan must recommend wildlife crossing projects that prioritize promotion of driver safety and wildlife connectivity. For each recommended project, the plan must include a description of the project and the proposed wildlife crossing infrastructure or other mitigation techniques recommended to meet the goals of the plan.

(d) The department shall include in the plan maps detailing high-priority areas for wildlife corridor infrastructure and any other information necessary to meet the goals of the plan.

(e) Not later than December 1, 2028, the department shall submit the plan to the governor, lieutenant governor, and speaker of the house of representatives. This subsection expires September 1, 2029.

Sec. 12.803. COORDINATION WITH OTHER ENTITIES. The department shall assist other state agencies and political subdivisions of this state, and on request any federal agency, to consider and incorporate wildlife corridors, including plan recommendations, when developing any governmental strategic plan, map, or action.

Sec. 12.804. PLAN PUBLICATION AND UPDATES. The department shall:

(1) maintain publication of the plan on the department's Internet website; and

(2) periodically update the department's Internet website with information regarding the implementation of wildlife corridor projects recommended under the plan.

SECTION 2. This Act takes effect immediately if it receives a vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to each house, as provided by Section 39, Article III, Texas Constitution. If this Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate effect, this Act takes effect September 1, 2027.