

INVESTING IN INFRASTRUCTURE TO CONSERVE WILDLIFE AND RESTORE HABITAT

Passed: 221-201

SUMMARY:

The House passed a broad infrastructure package that included provisions to create a national system of wildlife corridors, restore habitat degraded by legacy roads and trails and create a new national wildlife refuge. *(July 1, 2021, Roll Call No. 208)*

BACKGROUND:

Prioritizing wildlife-friendly infrastructure is essential for conserving vulnerable species, restoring habitat and improving access to nature for all Americans. Rep. Peter DeFazio (D-Ore.) introduced H.R. 3684, the INVEST in America Act, as a large infrastructure package that included several important wildlife provisions. The bill contained over \$300 million in annual funding for wildlife crossings, corridors and other connectivity projects through agency funding and grants to states, tribes and private landowners. H.R. 3684 also sought to create a National System of Wildlife Corridors on federal lands to better support wildlife movement in the face of climate change and development. The package also supplied significant funding to remediate, repair and improve roads, bridges and trails in national forests and would have provided \$100 million per year for the Legacy Roads and Trails program (LRT), which has already fixed over 1,000 culverts, and enable the Forest Service to restore hundreds of miles of aquatic habitat. The legislation included a provision to create the Western Riverside County National Wildlife Refuge, which would be one of the nation's largest urban refuges, conserving approximately 500,000 acres in southern California for the express purpose of preserving multiple endangered species and providing equitable access to nature for under-served communities. Each of these provisions would significantly benefit wildlife while also creating short-term and long-term jobs.

OUTCOME:

On July 1, 2021, the House passed the INVEST in America Act, 221-201. "Yea" was the pro-conservation vote. Subsequently, the final transportation infrastructure bill agreed to by both the House and Senate did include funding for wildlife crossings and remediation of forest roads and trails, but it did not include provisions to create a system for wildlife corridors or establish a new wildlife refuge.