

By: Senator(s) Dawkins

To: Wildlife, Fisheries and
Parks

SENATE BILL NO. 2431

1 AN ACT TO REQUIRE THE MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE,
2 FISHERIES AND PARKS, IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE MISSISSIPPI
3 DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY AND THE MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT
4 OF TRANSPORTATION, TO IDENTIFY EXISTING AND NEEDED WILDLIFE
5 CORRIDORS; TO FILE A REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS; AND FOR RELATED
6 PURPOSES.

7 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI:

8 **SECTION 1.** The Legislature finds and declares that:

9 (a) It is recognized as a public good that habitat
10 connectivity, including wildlife corridors and habitat linkages,
11 be maintained and expanded. It is the policy of the State of
12 Mississippi to encourage, wherever feasible and practical,
13 voluntary steps to protect the functioning of wildlife corridors
14 through various means, as applicable.

15 (b) Areas containing diverse ecological and geological
16 characteristics are vital to the continual health and well-being
17 of the state's natural resources and of its citizens.

18 (c) Connectivity between wildlife habitats is important
19 to the long-term viability of the state's biodiversity.

20 Preserving and connecting high-quality habitat for wildlife can



21 create habitat strongholds. Increasingly fragmented habitats
22 threaten the state's wildlife species.

23 (d) Analysis of the state's habitat connectivity
24 benefits from the consideration of all relevant data, including
25 information from private and public landowners.

26 **SECTION 2.** (1) Because of the importance of wildlife
27 corridors to assist in adapting to warming temperatures and
28 shifting habitats, create habitat strongholds, and in order to
29 protect ecosystem health and biodiversity and improve the
30 resiliency of wildlife and their habitats to such existing and
31 potential changes, the Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and
32 Parks, in collaboration with the Department of Environmental
33 Quality and the Department of Transportation, shall identify
34 existing and needed wildlife corridors, including riparian
35 corridors, and including potential crossings of transportation
36 arteries. The Executive Director of the Department of Wildlife,
37 Fisheries and Parks shall direct the department to audit existing
38 statutes, rules, and regulations that affect wildlife corridors
39 and shall make recommendations concerning any necessary changes.

40 (2) The executive director shall file a report containing
41 the department's findings and any recommendations to the Speaker
42 of the House of Representatives and the President of the Senate no
43 later than June 30, 2020.

44 (3) For purposes of this act, "wildlife corridor" means a
45 habitat linkage that joins two (2) or more areas of wildlife



46 habitat, allowing for fish passage or the movement of wildlife
47 from one (1) area to another, and "habitat stronghold" means
48 high-quality habitat that supports wildlife in being more
49 resilient to increasing pressures on species due to climate change
50 and land development.

51 **SECTION 3.** This act shall take effect and be in force from
52 and after July 1, 2019.

