



THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY

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Draft Position Statement

In accordance with TWS policy, The Wildlife Society Council seeks member review and comment on the following draft position statement, **The Impact of Border Security Measures on Wildlife**, prior to revising and finalizing it. Comments must be received by **15 December** to be considered in a final position statement.

Please send comments to: **Laura Bies, Director of Government Affairs, The Wildlife Society, 5410 Grosvenor Lane, Suite 200, Bethesda, MD 20814-2144, or via email to laura@wildlife.org.**

The Impact of Border Security Measures on Wildlife

The United States has the right and responsibility to secure its borders against entry by terrorists, smugglers, and others engaged in illegal activities, but border security measures can have a deleterious impact on wildlife. The Secure Fence Act of 2006 mandates the US Department of Homeland Security to construct steel fences three to four meters high along large sections of the US-Mexico border between San Diego, California, and Brownsville, Texas, totaling over 1,100 km. Impermeable border fences can limit demographic and genetic interchange among wildlife populations, and the ability of species to shift ranges in response to local weather conditions, normal seasonal movement and, ultimately, climate change. Section 102(c) of the Real ID Act of 2005 allows the US Department of Homeland Security to treat construction of roads and barriers along US borders as exempt from all federal, state, and local environmental laws, including the Endangered Species Act and National Environmental Policy Act.

The US-Mexico border forms a boundary for at least eleven US and three Mexican designated conservation areas including wildlife refuges, national parks, and biosphere reserves. An impermeable fence along the US-Mexico border could prohibit cross-border movement of a wide range of species including jaguar, ocelot, jaguarundi, Mexican gray wolf, Sonoran pronghorn, bighorn sheep, black bear, desert tortoise, pygmy-owl (since most of its flights are less than 3 feet from the ground), kit fox, badger, North American porcupine, and black-tailed prairie dog. An impermeable fence could harm local wildlife populations by limiting access to rare resources such as water.

The US-Canada border forms a boundary for at least 17 US and eight Canadian wildlife designated conservation areas including refuges, national, state, and provincial parks. Mammals that historically ranged freely across the US-Canada border and for which continuing free movement is vitally important include gray wolf, woodland caribou, fisher, grizzly bear, Canada lynx, wolverine, black-footed ferret, and mountain goat.

The policy of The Wildlife Society in regard to the impact of border security measures on wildlife is to:

1. Recommend that Congress repeal section 102(c) of the Real ID Act of 2005.
2. Support new legislation to require the Department of Homeland Security to (a) determine the effects that border security structures and operations will have on wildlife and explore alternatives to impermeable fences, and (b) require compliance with environmental laws.
3. Request that the Director of the US Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Secretary for Homeland Security consider and mitigate potential negative impacts of border security structures to wildlife.
4. Request that the Director and Secretary issue a moratorium on further construction to allow for investigation into and adoption of reasonable alternatives to an impenetrable barrier. Study and mitigation are needed not only for physical barriers, but also for patrol activities, manipulation of vegetation, and the virtual fence under construction along some portions of the US-Mexico border.
5. Support research on alternatives to impermeable fences, such as combinations of vehicle barriers, electronic surveillance, and various designs of crossing structures.
6. Support research on the impacts to wildlife stemming from other border security measures, including stadium lighting, wide swaths cleared of vegetation, and patrol by vehicles and low-flying aircraft.
7. Support adequate funding for and implementation of initiatives to reduce damage to borderland wildlife and resources.