

SARAH HARMON and JOE GREATHOUSE, Dept of Biology, West Liberty University, West Liberty, WV, 26074. A Preliminary Study on the use of pipeline right-of-ways as corridors by predators in northern West Virginia.

Habitat fragmentation is a leading conservation concern for predators that require large home ranges with suitable habitat to persist. Previous studies have shown that man-made linear corridors may provide a connection between suitable habitat patches isolated by fragmentation. Corridors allow predators to easily move between patches to access prey, find proper structures for denning and to disperse the population.

Natural gas pipeline right-of-ways may provide corridors for bobcats and coyotes in northern West Virginia. We are currently conducting a camera trap survey to compare the use of pipeline right-of-ways and forested areas by bobcats and coyotes in four counties in the northern panhandle of West Virginia. Preliminary data shows some evidence that bobcats and coyotes are utilizing pipeline right-of-ways as corridors and supports the findings of previous research. However, more data must be collected provide a larger sample size, and thus, a stronger correlation between coyote and bobcat presence on pipeline right-of-ways.