

December 6, 2014

Mr. Jack Baylis  
California Fish and Game Commission  
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2014 DEC 10 PM 3: 22

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Dear Mr. Baylis

I attended the CA Fish and Game Commission meeting in Van Nuys, CA this past Wednesday and intended to speak on agenda item #14. It was my first time (at the state or federal level) ever attending a meeting which included the opportunity for public comment. The meeting was so much larger than I expected (and therefore slower moving) and I had driven three hours to attend the meeting and, unfortunately, I needed to make the drive back to my home in Inyo county before the item came up for commission/public discussion. I did watch item #14 unfold via the internet and despite the considerable number of speakers present on the issue of bobcat trapping I felt like the unique *observations* I have on the issue were not quite duplicated by any other speakers. So I am writing you hoping it is not too late to have my observations taking into account before the WRC makes a decision.

My observations come to you from a very specific location and given this I will quickly orient you to the place I am discussing. I live in the southern portion of the eastern Sierras in Inyo county, underneath Olancha peak. I live on a deadend road which travels from highway 395 at 4000' and meanders west for a short 5 miles before it ends at almost 6000' at the Olancha Pass trailhead. The road traverses geological and environmental transition zones and holds all wildlife you could imagine from the Mojave desert to the top of the Sierras. My house is the last house on the highway as you head up the road (about the 2.5 mile mark) and borders directly the National Forest Service lands. My home is perched between the road and one of the canyon/drainages in the area.

I do not have a dog on the property, there is comparatively little human activity, and this leaves my property NOT actively avoided by the mammals such as deer, bear, fox, coyotes etc. I have watched them right out the windows in search of food and in play. They cannot smell me when I am inside the house, and they often can't see me through light reflections on the window pane, and so I can be within 20 feet of a bobcat without him/her knowing. Where five years ago I saw approximately 12-15 bobcats out my window in a given year, in the past two years I have seen a total of two. These numbers are accurate and truthful, are forwarded to you by someone experienced in wildlife observation, and made over time (years).

This radical decrease in sightings coincided with an unusual increase in trapper activity on my road in the last three years or so. The increase is in both the number of trappers, and the number of traps the trappers bring with them. Last year one trapper brought in excess of 40 traps (used a trailer to bring them all) and camped (illegally) at the end of the road for two months straight trapping and killing who knows how many bobcats/foxes. This trapper did not return this year, yet two

new ones did, with four trappers working this small area currently. At least one of these remaining trappers this year brought approximately two separate loads of traps up the first two days of the trapping season, about double what he brought last year. There are places where competing trappers have their traps within 20 feet of each other.

In consideration of your time I will refrain from making this letter too lengthy in also offering commentary on this unique trapper-constellation not acting legally in their trapping pursuits even under current laws/regulations, the trouble the trappers bring the neighborhood, the lack of game wardens in this area (due to lack of funding/availability I am sure), the expansive and unpopulated (human) nature of this landscape as it contributes to the erosion of ethical trapping behavior by trappers (particularly when a good pelt can bring \$1000), and I will not repeat the important environmental and ecological issues outlined well by other speakers at the December 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting. Instead, I will leave you with my observations over the last five years and hope they will be received with my explicit encouragement for bobcat trapping to be abolished in the state, and that if this is not possible then limit bag limits to one bobcat per licensed trapper. My recommendation comes to you not just from the more common concern for this wonderful species and its contribution to wilderness, but more specifically from the radical changes in the bobcat population I have seen over the last 5 years - in direct response to the change in human (trapper) behavior since the value of bobcat pelts have skyrocketed overseas. I am a hunter, and I know what a recommendation like mine brings about in the mindset of some hunters, but there are an great number of hunters who feel very differently about what is happening with fur bearing mammal trapping over and above that of other hunts.

Mr. Baylis, I am writing this letter to you considering your membership on the WRC and given my experience of your metered, balanced, and yet pointed involvement in this issue at the Decemebr 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting. However, I invite you to distribute this letter to any committee member or colleague you think would benefit from taking the time to read it.

I sincerely thank you for your time and consideration of my late coming letter.



Nathan Hunter

