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Please distribute to all fish and wildlife commissioners and posted on the related agenda items for the January 14th Wildlife Resource Committee and the February 11th Fish and Game Commission Meeting

Re: Bobcat trapping in California and Predator Management Reform

Dear Commissioners:

A highly significant percentage of California residents feel that predator management practices under the state's Fish and Wildlife Department are deeply out of date and out of step with the current American wildlife model and that the exploitation of wildlife for profit, the model of the late 1800's to the early 1900's is archaic for our times.

It is unlikely that commissioners will find this surprising as they are entrusted with the health of wildlife within the borders of our Golden State. As such, the people of California look to the Commission to secure creation's vibrant health for future generations. In speaking with several mid to upper level fish and game officers, I was quite pleasantly surprised to find that they were in tacit agreement with current public opinion that a more enlightened policy and the need to prioritize the use of best science available to address the current sensibilities of the residents of California who view the mountain lion, bobcat, grey and kit fox and coyote as a precious natural resource and an essential part of their natural habitat.

If we take the bobcat, one of only three existing wild cats in all of North American excluding Mexico, only a few hundred (almost negligible number) of people are engaged in trapping in California, one to two thousand (very small number) take tags for hunting and only some 200 (extremely small number) get filled, illuminating the fact that there is simply not a significant amount of recreation demand, nor revenues accruing to the trapper or the state.

Yet these apex predators are the keystone species that perform a host of vital services fundamental to the healthy structure of the ecosystem they are an inherent part of.



Among the most obvious of these services is keeping rodent populations under control. When the apex predators are reduced sufficiently, the signs of an ecosystem out of order become evident. Even when harassed by hunters and trappers, the more wary of these predators will avoid the outskirts of human communities, causing a bloom of rodent infestations. Rodents are a primary part of our predator's diet. Research illuminates that the average coyote consumes some 1800 rodents annually. Homeowners, farm owners, and businesses, both suburban and rural now turn to rely on rodenticides – which, in turn, come full cycle to destroy non-target species – the keystone predators and raptors, which effect natural control.

Such a chain of events verifies the fundamental disorder as well as costly chemical control created by reducing predator species either locally or far further afield.

While the Fish and Wildlife Code: 1801 & 1802, as well as the Bobcat Protection Act of 2013 are certainly a step forward, full protection for hunting and trapping is within, we would hope, close reach. Further, the bobcat protection act's section 2, illuminate the following:

(F) Current regulations provide for the commercial sale and export of bobcat pelts taken by hunters or trappers in California.

(G) The Legislature further finds that a rise in the demand for bobcat pelts in China and other foreign markets has resulted in a substantial increase in the number of trappers taking bobcats as well as in the number of bobcats taken for commercial purposes in California.

These provisions would serve to substantially dilute the substance of the act. Identifying increased demand for bobcat pelts in China (and other foreign markets) is in keeping with increased demand for elephant ivory, and fueling the ivory trade globally and in particular China, whose rapacious hunger for wildlife products is widely recognized as vastly destructive. It is gratifying that U.S. federal legislation is in effect to mitigate a significant sector of that trade.

It is my constituency's hope that more sound and humane predator management practices and legislation can soon evolve. We look with hope, to the California Fish and Game Commission for this resolve.

Sincerely,



Arnold Newman, Ph.D.

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