

MOUNTAIN LION FOUNDATION

*Saving America's Lion*TM

Board of Directors

Toby Cooper
Board Chair

Elizabeth Sullivan
Vice Chair

Jonathan Naimon
Treasurer

Kathy Fletcher
Steve Harris
Rabbi Joseph Hurwitz
John Taft
Dr. Chris T. Tromborg Phd.

Executive Director
Timothy Dunbar

Honorary Board

Robert Bateman
Michael Blake
Doris Day
Sir William Fries II
Mr. & Mrs. Gordon P. Getty
Marian Heiskell
Sandy Lerner
Barry Lopez
Peter Matthiessen
Hon. William Newsom
Russell Peterson
Alan Rabinowitz
Robert Redford
Nathaniel P. Reed
Dr. George Schaller
Hon. Russell Train
Robert Wagner

California Department of Fish and Game
Wildlife Division
1812 Ninth Street
Sacramento, CA 95811

November 24, 2010

RE: California State Game Refuge Closures: Public Comments
Position: **OPPOSED**

Dear Sirs,

The Mountain Lion Foundation and its California-based members emphatically oppose the California Department of Fish and Game's plans to close any State Game Refuge in order to provide additional recreational opportunities for hunters. Whether or not these lands are effective breeding grounds for deer is immaterial. As "hunt free zones" their value as safe havens for all of California's wildlife is irreplaceable.

At a time when California's deer population has plummeted by 46 percent over the past two decades, the concept that now is the time to remove "safe zones" which might possibly help the species recover is ludicrous. Even some members of the California Deer Association disagree with CDFG's proposal, and argue that the Department is "*not managing to protect wildlife. They're managing to (sell) more deer tags.*"

We find CDFG's arguments in favor of this action to be specious, and unsupported by any documentation or study. Their assertion that the "*elimination of the "State Game Refuge" designation will have no significant impact on the wildlife and ecosystems of these lands,*" appears to be only wishful thinking on their part.

In fact the only truth apparent in the Department's on-line arguments is that "*elimination of any refuges status would increase the amount of private and public land open to hunting in California.*"

Further, we are disappointed in the Department's so-called efforts to solicit public comment. Their actions give the impression that they were trying to restrict participation to only that small segment of the public which favors increasing hunting opportunities. How is this an honest effort to find out how the majority of Californians feel about wildlife habitat which has been protected for the past hundred years?

The days when California's wildlife belonged solely to hunters are long past. For some time now the actual number of recreational hunters has been

steadily declining. According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, hunters only account for 4 percent of the nation's population--an 11 percent drop from numbers reported twenty years ago. In California the number is even less. In 2001, only one percent of California's 34 million residents classified themselves as hunters.

The notion that hunters "pay" for California's wildlife is outdated and patently false! The majority of CDFG's revenue comes from taxes paid by all Californians. Based on CDFG's own figures, the sale of deer-hunting tags and licenses could only have generated somewhere between \$6.5 to \$9 million dollars in direct revenue for CDFG in 2009. The Department's 2011 budget calls for more than \$418 million in expenditures.

Regardless of the original intent when these refuges were created, nobody can claim that they are not benefiting California's wildlife now! The State spends millions of dollars each year to acquire and protect wildlife habitat. Why should we throw away 1,100 square miles of habitat that has meant safety for so many animals? If these lands no longer fit CDFG's neat definition for "State Game Refuges" then the Department should redesignate them as "State Wildlife Areas," not give them away to placate a few hunters!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'TD', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Tim Dunbar
Executive Director

Mountain Lion Foundation
PO Box 1896
Sacramento, CA 95812
(916) 442-2666