April 14, 2017

Assemblymember Richard Bloom
P.O. Box 942849
Sacramento, CA 94249-0050

RE: Support for Assembly Bill 8 - Options for issuing mountain lion depredation permits.

Dear Assemblymember Bloom,

The undersigned organizations write to convey our support for allowing the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) greater flexibility in responding to mountain lion depredations. We appreciate that if enacted, your AB 8 will allow CDFW to tailor their response to the specific circumstances of the incident, providing a wider variety of management tools and greater protection for livestock, people and lions.

Changes to California’s mountain lion protection statute are needed so that CDFW is engaged to help better assess the underlying causes of specific depredations, provide suggestions for avoiding future conflicts, offer alternative deterrent actions short of lethal control, and to consider the interests of the mountain lion population prior to issuing a permit authorizing the mountain lion to be killed.
Thousands of mountain lions have been killed through issuance of these permits in California: 100 lions in 2016 alone. Scientists know very little about mountain lion populations in the state, although recent research has demonstrated that some populations are isolated, genetically compromised, at very low densities, and may be threatened with extirpation within decades.

Equally significant, recent research has shown that killing a lion does not adequately address the underlying causes of depredation – primarily failures in animal husbandry and protection practices in known mountain lion territories – and may even increase the frequency of further conflict.

CDFW necropsy reports show that only 40 percent of the lions killed on depredation permits in 2016 could be verified to have preyed on domestic animals by examination of their stomach contents. When well-established and non-depredating lions are killed, territories open up that may be filled by younger lions who compete for food, and conflicts may actually increase for miles around.

It is also significant that although people tend to think of depredations as events related to large herds of cattle, the sad reality is that most lions killed on depredation permits are targeted for preying on goats. The vast majority of these goats are kept in groups of 5-10 on very small acreages, and could be very easily protected by penning in secure enclosures from dusk to dawn.

Thank you for introducing AB 8 to expand the options that may be presented to the owners of domestic animals, many of whom would prefer an alternative that did not require killing a mountain lion.

We appreciate your leadership and are grateful for your effort to provide greater safety to people and domestic animals, while promoting protection of the most vulnerable populations of mountain lions in California as well.

Sincerely,

Nicole Paquette
Vice President, Wildlife Protection
The Humane Society of the United States

Brendan Cummings
Conservation Director
Center for Biological Diversity

Jena Price
Legislative Affairs Manager
California League of Conservation Voters

Lindsay Larris
Los Angeles Regional Director
Animal Legal Defense Fund

Edward Moreno
Policy Advocate
Sierra Club - California

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