Good Media Coverage = More Living Lions

The Foundation is calling upon supporters across the country to adopt their local news outlets in a national campaign to provide accurate and helpful media coverage of mountain lions.

“We need every single supporter to sign onto this campaign by June 1,” said MLF Outreach Director Karen Cotton, “so that people can get the information they need, when they need it, to protect themselves, their pets and their mountain lions.”

Because mountain lions make exciting headlines, reporters often sensationalize situations and fuel ignorance and fear. Focusing on controversy, rather than how to resolve potential problems, media stories often lead directly to the death of a lion that is simply wandering through a populated area.

This challenge is exacerbated by reporters being extremely busy and unlikely to be experts in mountain lion behavior. When the need for a story arises, they have little time to find facts or a person to interview. MLF is meeting this challenge thanks to a generous grant from Bozack and Kruger Foundation.

With the help of media experts at De Vries Media, MLF created a cutting edge online media toolkit providing reporters tools needed to complete their story, including broadcast quality video of mountain lions and of interviews with Lynn Sadler and Chris Papouchis. The interviews tell people what to do until the lion moves on.

This is available free to the media, 24 hours a day, 7 days per week at www.TheNewsMarket.com/mountainlion. The toolkit also directs reporters to staff should they have additional questions.

“The trick will be for MLF supporters to make sure reporters know this information when they need it,” said Karen Cotton, Outreach Director. “That is why we need every lion supporter to adopt one or more local news outlets.”

Each outlet adoption requires only a few minutes per month. To make adopting a local news outlet as easy as possible, the Foundation will provide each adopter with a news adoption kit. Each adopter will notify MLF which news outlet(s) they wish to adopt and be given a script and other tools to make it easy and simple to mind their outlet.

MLF’s goal is to have each of the 1,150 local news outlets in the West and Florida adopted by June 1st. Call or email Karen Cotton at 800-319-7621 ext 110 or Karen@mountainlion.org.

Strong science urged for lion management

National Wildlife Federation unanimously “urged all state and federal wildlife agencies to incorporate the Cougar Management Guidelines in any cougar management plan, policy, or regulation.” The Guidelines were authored by 13 of the world’s most senior puma scientists, under the coordination of Sharon Negri, former executive director of MLF. Thanks to the Planning and Conservation League and the Montana Chapter that co-sponsored this resolution.

Click on www.mountainlion.org to see the full resolution, NWF’s report “Endangered Cats of North America”, MLF’s pen builds made possible by a grant from NWF or to buy your own copy of the Guidelines. Special thanks to MLF founder and former president Bill Yeates who championed this resolution through the process. Our heartfelt appreciation to NWF staff James Schroeder and Matt Little for their excellent work on this issue.
Spring cleaning benefits MLF

Rather than having a garage sale this spring, consider selling your castoffs on eBay and designating a portion of the sales to be donated to MLF. On eBay, you can sell or buy just about anything from a high school yearbook to real estate.

eBay, the online auction company, allows sellers to assign all or part of their online proceeds to MLF. If you already have an eBay user name and password, take a minute to register with MissionFish at www.missionfish.org. It takes less than a minute to register a new account.

Once registered with MissionFish, search for items currently on auction that will benefit MLF and bid on these items or list items to sell designating MLF to receive anywhere from 10% to 100% of the proceeds from each item auctioned. When a seller donates 100% of the final sale price, eBay will donate their fees as well.

A gift receipt will be sent for tax purposes.

Other online charitable retailers also benefit MLF. If you shop online, start at www.mycause.com or www.igive.com and MLF will receive up to 35% of the purchase price. For example, going through those sites, you can subscribe to Netflix or purchase at Amazon.com or Home Depot.

For more information on a growing variety of donor opportunities, contact Tim Dunbar at 800-319-7621 or tdunbar@mountainlion.org.

Just say NO to killing lions

A new precedent has changed California Department of Fish and Game's routine refusal to tranquilize and relocate mountain lions as a matter of policy. For the second time, someone at the scene refused to kill the lion and they made a difference. In both cases the lion was tranquilized and transported home.

In 2004, a Gonzales, California, homeowner trapped a mountain lion in his garage and refused to allow officials to kill the lion. The homeowner allowed the lion to stay in the garage, while officials organized a plan to rescue rather than kill the lion. After six hours, the lion was safely tranquilized and returned to the wild.

In February, a mountain lion was found napping in a backyard in Altadena, California. MLF supporters went into action to prevent the killing of this lion. Some called DFG and the news media to tell them not to kill the lion. Others were on the scene with cameras to record what happened. Still others called local television news for updates, resulting in live helicopter camera coverage of the unfolding events.

DFG originally said the lion would have to be killed, because they had no tranquilizer available -- so the local animal control agency offered one. When DFG stated they did not have the means to transport the lion back to the wild, the local agency offered to do it.

Ultimately, DFG did tranquilize the lion and transport it back to Angeles National Forest.

MLF praises DFG for this new policy. Kudos to the local animal control workers and individuals who refused to allow the lions to be killed. They stood up for the lions and just said no.

MLF
Oregon's draft Cougar Management Plan calls for the killing of more than 3,000 lions over the next five years. Oregon game managers mistakenly assume that randomly shooting mountain lions for fun will solve their perceived depredation concerns, even though sound science indicates otherwise. MLF will continue to fight the approval of this plan.

Alternatively, MLF provides win-win solutions: saving ranchers and farmers money, saving pets and livestock, saving taxpayers money, saving the Department of Fish and wildlife from the pressure to kill lions, and in the long run saving the landscape Oregonians love. The Living with Lions campaign features educational presentations and predator-proof small livestock enclosures, which emphasize personal responsibility and protecting livestock, rather than killing lions.

"While Oregon’s policy makers spend time and money debating how many mountain lions there are, how many should be killed each year, how lions should be killed and where the hundreds of thousands of dollars will come from to pay for it, the Mountain Lion Foundation provides local ranchers solutions that make all those questions moot," said Lynn Sadler, MLF President and CEO.

The most recent predator-proof enclosure was constructed near Salem, Oregon, at Verdant Vistas, a commercial fiber-goat farm owned by Pat and George Copa. Visit Verdant Vistas online at www.VerdantVistas.com.

“Our animals are very dear to us. From an economic perspective, they are valuable commercial property. Thus, it's critical to us that they are safe and healthy at all times,” said Mrs. Copa. “On the other hand, we also treasure the critters that live in the hills around us and frequently call out at night with their eerie howls and barks.”

Verdant Vistas’ predator-proof enclosure serves as a model for the community. The Copas welcome visitors to the farm to view the enclosure. The enclosure has been featured in television, radio and print news around the region.

The Capital Press, a weekly agricultural newspaper, featured the enclosure in a February article, which sent readers to the MLF website to download free building plans. Heifer International announced that they are now sharing MLF’s building plans with members of their USA Program. They emphasize to these members that even if they don’t have mountain lions in their area, these designs protect from other predators in their area.

The Oregon Wildlife Commission is scheduled to discuss and make decisions on their draft Cougar Management Plan on April 13 in Salem.

Create a Legacy for Lions

The Mountain Lion Foundation invites those planning their estates to leave a legacy for mountain lions by:

- Earmarking a donation in your will
- Naming MLF as beneficiary of your IRA, insurance policies or pensions
- Donating appreciated stocks or property
- Creating a charitable remainder trust

The Mountain Lion Foundation is a charitable nonprofit educational organization, federal ID number 94-3015360. For more information, contact Tim Dunbar at 800-319-7621 or tdunbar@mountainlion.org.
Political Round-up

Decisions affecting America's lion are made at the local level, several times a day. Just as America's lion doesn't recognize borders, neither does MLF nor its supporters. Everyone must speak for the lions, regardless of where the decisions or actions are happening.

California – Two bills regarding mountain lions have been introduced. AB 2467 would require the Department of Fish and Game to allow US Fish and Wildlife Service to issue depredation permits to kill mountain lions in the state. AB 2273 would reimburse those injured by mountain lions for medical, physical and psychological costs, to be paid from the Wildlife Restoration Fund. The bills' author introduced a 2005 bill to reinstate sport hunting of mountain lions and seems determined to interfere with the will of the voters.

Florida – A federal report in January announced that the Florida panther population is still endangered, but healthier, and that it must be given the habitat to grow in order to survive. This will require allowing the cats to return home to areas across the southeastern U.S. where they were previously driven to extinction. MLF President Lynn Sadler is serving on a stakeholder's team to assist with this effort.

In an effort to keep people and panthers safe and comfortable, the National Park Service sent letters to Everglades communities stressing the importance of securing livestock properly, including tips and MLF predator-proof pen plans.

Montana – Fish, Wildlife and Parks changed the mountain lion sport hunting season from a quota system to include a permit system in several regions. MLF continues to oppose the random shooting of lions for fun regardless of how agencies choose to structure it.

North Dakota – The state's "experimental" hunting season opened September 2 and closed January 15 with the killing of a 39-pound, 4 to 6 month old female kitten. This hunt was scheduled "to try to determine what we have for lions in the state, and whether we have a breeding population or not", according to Randy Kreil, wildlife division chief for the North Dakota Game and Fish Department. State officials have said another season may be held later this year. Sadly, this is not illegal.

Oklahoma – The state Senate has approved and the House is now hearing Senate Bill 1296 which authorizes open season on mountain lions, black bears and otters. According to the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation, there have been no population surveys or habitat assessments in more than fifty years that could confirm a breeding population in Oklahoma. The Department has listed the mountain lion as a Species of Greatest Conservation Need.

Oregon – A decision is expected on the draft Cougar Management Plan on April 13, at the Commission hearing in Salem. The deadline for public comments is April 12. Keep them coming.

South Dakota – South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks officials are considering a 2006 mountain lion hunting season and say they will recommend at least what was approved last year. Last year South Dakota had its first mountain lion season after an MLF lawsuit could not stop it. The season opened Oct. 1, and the first lion was killed just hours into the season. It ended 23 days later.