Half Moon Bay Mayor, Wildlife Groups Join Senator Hill to Celebrate New Mountain Lion Protection Law

November 26, 2013

Media Advisory
Office of Senator Jerry Hill

Wildlife Groups Join Senator Jerry Hill, Half Moon Bay Mayor Rick Kowalcyzk and A Rescued Mountain Lion to Celebrate New Legislation to Protect Non-Threatening Mountain Lions that Wander into Populated Areas

WHAT: Senate Bill 132, a mountain lion public safety bill introduced by Senator Jerry Hill, takes effect New Year’s Day. The legislation authorizes the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) to use only nonlethal procedures when responding to reports of mountain lions near residences that do not involve an imminent threat to human life. It also authorizes the department to partner with wildlife groups and nonprofits to resolve these situations.

Representatives of the Mountain Lion Foundation and other wildlife groups will join Hill and Half Moon Bay Mayor Rick Kowalcyzk to discuss progress made in recent months in dealing with mountain lions that wander into populated areas.

WHEN: 11 a.m. Sunday, December 1, 2013

WHERE: Mac Dutra Park
Half Moon Bay
(Corner of Main and Kelly Streets)

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BACKGROUND: Hill, D-San Mateo, introduced Senate Bill 132 after two mountain lion cubs were fatally shot on Dec. 1, 2012, in a Half Moon Bay neighborhood. State game wardens and San Mateo County sheriff’s deputies were unable to shoo the cubs from the neighborhood to nearby Burleigh Murray Ranch State Park, and regulations did not permit the officers to pursue other options.

Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) officials initially said the female siblings weighed 25 to 30 pounds. But necropsies showed they were only about 4 months old, weighed 13 to 14 pounds and were starving and unlikely to survive in the wild without their mother. The incident in Half Moon Bay and another mountain lion shooting in Redwood City in 2011 were unfortunate examples of the lack of flexibility in regulations pertaining to DFW’s response when mountain lions venture into populated areas.

SB 132, which was signed by Governor Brown on September 6, provides the DFW with additional resources to deal with wayward mountain lions. Coauthored by Assemblymen Rich
Gordon, D-Menlo Park, and Kevin Mullin, D-South San Francisco, the bill also requires that nonlethal procedures be used when DFW responds to a mountain lion that has not been designated as an imminent threat to public health or safety. Among the options included in “nonlethal procedures” are capturing, pursuing, anesthetizing, marking, transporting, hazing, releasing, providing veterinary care to and rehabilitating mountain lions, among other actions.

“SB 132 strikes the right balance when protecting humans and wildlife,” Hill said. “Wardens still have the ability to kill mountain lions when the public is at risk. But this legislation gives wardens the flexibility and resources to better deal with the increasing number of mountain lion encounters throughout the state.”

Hill’s legislation will allow the DFW to partner with wildlife rescue and rehabilitation groups, veterinarians, zoos, colleges, universities and nonprofit organizations throughout the state that have the capability and experience to assist with mountain lion incidents. The Peninsula Humane Society, for example, rescues and rehabilitates injured and orphaned wildlife. Last year, the organization saved 1,450 wild animals in San Francisco, San Mateo and Santa Clara counties.

Below are some examples of positive mountain lion captures and relocations in recent months by the Department of Fish and Wildlife, according to the Mountain Lion Foundation, which has arranged for a rescued mountain lion to be at Sunday’s news conference. DFW revised their regulations in March to provide more flexibility to wardens when dealing with mountain lion encounters, consistent with SB 132.

**October 19, 2013 - San Jose (San Jose County)**
A family, living in a subdivision near Alum Rock Park, awoke to a mountain lion kitten hiding in their backyard. For several of the previous nights, neighborhood dogs had been upset and barking at some kind of disturbance, but no one could figure out what was set them off. Their search uncovered a small, frail-looking mountain lion kitten hiding in their backyard and too weak to escape over a 3-foot-tall retaining wall. The family corralled the lion kitten with a folding dog pen fence and contacted the Wildlife Center of Silicon Valley. California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) wardens who responded took the kitten to the Wildlife Center for evaluation. The lion kitten, estimated as 3-months-old, was found to be severely dehydrated, anemic and emaciated. After a few days care, the rescued kitten was transferred to CDFW's Wildlife Investigation Laboratory, near Sacramento.

**July 27, 2013 - Yucaipa (San Bernardino County)**
Awakened by the barking of his dogs, a Yucaipa resident discovered a young mountain lion perched about 25 feet up in his tree. San Bernardino County Sheriff’s deputies responded to the call and quickly contained the situation by ordering all residents and spectators into their homes and blocking off two nearby residential streets in case the lion tried to escape. The responding CDFW warden determined there was no “imminent threat” to the public and decided to tranquilize the animal. After being shot with the dart, the lion quietly stayed in its lofty perch until falling asleep whereupon CalFire firefighters carefully lowered the animal to the ground. Upon examination it was determined that the lion was a healthy, slightly underweight, 2-year-old female weighing approximately 75 pounds. Andrew Hughan, a spokesman for CDFW said “the major reason a cat comes into a populated area is in search of food. The big picture is habitat
loss. There is no indication or science that the cat population is increasing." The sedated lion was taken to the San Bernardino National Forest and released back into the wild.

May 16, 2013 - Santa Cruz (Santa Cruz County)
While roaming near downtown, a mountain lion jumped a chain-link fence and became trapped in a drainage aqueduct. Local police, state Fish and Wildlife, and lion researchers from U.C. Santa Cruz came together to rescue the lion. It was tranquilized, fitted with a tracking collar, and released into the nearby Forest of Nisene Marks State Park. In June, researchers said the lion, now named 39M, was doing well. It appeared to be looking for an available territory and was feeding on deer and raccoons. It successfully crossed the treacherous Highway 17 in the Santa Cruz Mountains several times, but on Halloween morning 39M was struck and killed by a vehicle while crossing the highway.

May 6, 2013 - Lancaster (Los Angeles County)
A Lancaster resident woke up that Monday morning to find a mountain lion in her front yard. Barking dogs alerted the woman to the 100-pound cougar, and the terrified woman contacted authorities. The Lancaster Sheriff’s Station received the report around 8 a.m. from the home just north of Apollo Park. Deputies who responded to the call for help monitored the safety of the scene until the California Department of Fish and Wildlife arrived. By that time, the mountain lion had climbed into a tree in the resident’s front yard. Fish and Wildlife officers darted the animal with a tranquilizer, and once subdued, the female mountain lion was taken to safety. Newspapers reported it was later released back into the wild.

April 11, 2013 - Glendale (Los Angeles County)
A male mountain lion was tranquilized and returned to the wild after wandering into a neighborhood in Glendale. The city sits in the 15-mile stretch of developed land between the Santa Monica Mountains and Angeles National Forest, just north of Los Angeles. Residents spotted the 125-pound mountain lion jumping backyard fences on a Thursday around noon. A homeowner saw the animal through his sliding glass door and called 911. California Fish and Wildlife officers responded and after three shots from a tranquilizer gun, had sedated. The lion was quickly evaluated and appeared to be a healthy male who had merely gotten lost in the urban maze after wandering a little too far down the mountain. The lion was loaded into the back of an officer's truck and given a short ride back to Angeles National Forest while sleeping off the drugs.

March 9, 2013 - San Jose (San Jose County)
On the evening of March 9, wildlife officers from CDFW, local animal control officers, and the San Jose police department responded to a call in San Jose. A young, 15-pound mountain lion was observed hiding in the backyard shrubs of a residential neighborhood. With the assistance of local nonprofit Wildlife Emergency Services, CDFW successfully captured the cub and transported it to the Wildlife Center of Silicon Valley, where the cub was sedated and examined. Although the cub was bright, alert and responsive, it was in poor condition. It was underweight, very dehydrated and heavily infested with fleas and ticks. After giving the cub fluids and applying flea control, the cub was moved to a secure area and allowed to rest overnight. The next day the cub was transported to CDFW's Wildlife Investigations Laboratory (WIL) in Rancho Cordova where it received additional treatments that included fluids, antibiotics, de-wormer, and
tick treatment. WIL staff carefully reintroduced the underweight cub to appropriate foods and, with the help of the Folsom Zoo, designed a balanced diet that would satisfy the nutritional needs for the growing cub. CDFW worked with the Arizona Game and Fish Department to arrange for the lion to be adopted by the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum. The cub was transferred on April 15th and later named "Cruz."

January 7, 2013 - Santa Barbara (Santa Barbara County)
A mountain lion spotted in a backyard near a golf course was tranquilized by California Fish and Wildlife officers and transported back into the mountains north of Santa Barbara. Authorities believe the young lion was roaming through a greenbelt and but in effect reached a “dead end” when it wandered into the town. A veterinarian who also responded to the scene briefly checked the sedated animal. After a short drive up the mountain, officers released the lion into the Los Padres National Forest once the sedatives wore off.

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