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Saving America's Lion

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September 7, 2012

Governor Jerry Brown
State Capitol, Suite 1173
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Senate Bill 1221
POSITION: SUPPORT

Dear Governor Brown,

The Mountain Lion Foundation respectfully urges you to sign Senate Bill 1221 to ban hounds when sport hunting bears and bobcats. Hounding is an inhumane and outdated blood sport. Shooting an exhausted and frightened animal out of a tree is unethical hunting and it has no place in modern wildlife management or recreation. Hounding has been banned in two-thirds of the United States. In our opinion it is unconscionable as well as embarrassing that California (*which in so many ways is on the forefront of proper natural resource management*) still allows the practice.

Using hounds violates all claims of "fair chase" and ultimately does not protect sows and cubs.

Through our efforts to protect mountain lions from sport hunting in the United States, the Foundation has conducted extensive research on the statement that allowing the use of hounds makes hunters more selective: letting females and juveniles go and only shooting trophy-sized adult males. However, a review of 30 years of records from game managers throughout the western United States found that although technically feasible, most hunters could not tell the size and sex of an animal up a tree. In both black bear and bobcat species, males look virtually identical to females.

Furthermore, of the hunters who claimed to be selective and said they would let smaller and female animals go free, less than 30 percent actually did so. Hounding an animal is sometimes an all day event: following the hounds for hours on end, over rugged terrain, until they finally wear out the bear or bobcat and it seeks refuge up a tree. After the excitement and exhaustion (and hefty expense if a professional guide was used), more than 70 percent of hunters shoot the first animal they tree, regardless of age, size, or sex.

Letting a bear go after being hounded and treed is still cruel.

Late summer and fall is when bears are trying to rapidly put on weight in preparation for hibernating. Being chased numerous times during these months, sometimes up to twelve hours a day, not only adds undue stress to the animal but it burns critical calories the bear needs to survive the winter. Even though no shots may be fired, the practice of catch-and-release hounding can still be a slow and painful death sentence, or force desperate and hungry-bears to enter urban areas to compensate their natural diet with an easy meal from dumpsters, rural homes, campgrounds, and the like.

Bears that have been chased out of their natural territories are more likely to come into conflict with people and be killed under our state's public safety policies. Hence an increase in nuisance bear reports may be due to over exploitation of the species in their natural areas by houndsmen, and should not be twisted into an excuse to kill or harass even more bears and exacerbate the problem.

Hound hunting guides make good money and are a very vocal group. But please Governor Brown, make no mistake, this is an archaic and cruel practice for both wild animals and domestic dogs that needs to be banned in our state.

Californians have already exterminated the Grizzly, which remains proudly displayed on our state flag; the least we can do is treat our last remaining bear species humanely and ensure its survival on California's wildlands.

Proper wildlife management and preservation are very important to Californians. We thank you for upholding these values in the past and hope you'll continue to show your support by signing Senate Bill 1221 into law.

Sincerely,

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

Timothy Dunbar,
Executive Director