



May 2, 2022

Los Angeles City Council
City of Los Angeles
200 N Spring Street
Los Angeles, California 90012

Re: Funding for Wildlife Ordinance Staff Positions in City of Los Angeles' 2022 Budget - SUPPORT

Dear Los Angeles City Council:

A strong wildlife ordinance is a critical step in protecting the City's biodiversity and open space for both people and wildlife. The undersigned organizations urge you to include funding for personnel to turn the wildlife pilot into a citywide ordinance in the 2022 budget, as requested by Councilmember Kevin de Leon. A strong ordinance that incorporates the amendments outlined in [this letter](#) submitted by conservation organizations to the Department of City Planning on August 9, 2021, will help protect wildlife and ecosystems and achieve co-benefits such as supporting climate resiliency and public health.

Life on Earth is experiencing a sixth mass extinction, with species disappearing at a rate of more than 1,000 times greater than the background extinction rate.¹ Habitat loss and fragmentation are the primary drivers of the extinction crisis. Combating this crisis requires engagement from all levels of government. In Southern California, local jurisdictions such as Ventura County have already adopted wildlife ordinances, and the City has an opportunity to join other forward-thinking jurisdictions in using its land use authority to protect wildlife and ecosystems.

In Los Angeles, local mountain lions exemplify the need for a strong wildlife ordinance. Local mountain lions are often unable to find mates, food, and shelter due to barriers caused by poorly sited development and roads. Southern California mountain lions – including the local Santa Monica Mountains population within the City – are now provisionally listed under

¹ Center for Biological Diversity, *California Connections: How Wildlife Connectivity Can Fight Extinction and Protect Public Safety* (Aug. 2021), available at <https://www.biologicaldiversity.org/campaigns/wildlife-connectivity/pdfs/California-Connections-wildlife-connectivity-report.pdf>.

the state endangered species act primarily due to loss of habitat connectivity. A strong wildlife ordinance will help ensure the survival of local mountain lions and advance the state's policy of preserving threatened and endangered species.

A strong wildlife ordinance will enhance fire safety.² The science is clear that increased development in high fire-prone wildlands can lead to more human-caused ignitions, as most contemporary wildfires in California are caused by human sources such as power lines, car sparks, cigarettes, and electrical equipment.³ Building new developments in high fire-risk areas increases unintentional ignitions and places more people in danger. Since 2015, almost 200 people in the state have been killed in wildfires, more than 50,000 structures have burned down, hundreds of thousands have had to evacuate their homes and endure power outages, and millions have been exposed to unhealthy levels of smoke and air pollution.⁴ In addition, increasing fire frequency due to development is converting chaparral and sage scrub ecosystems into non-native grasses that burn more easily, leading to a dangerous "feedback loop" of increasing fire and degraded habitats. A strong wildlife ordinance is an important step to combat these issues.

A wildlife ordinance will also foster climate resiliency. Climate change is worsening ecosystem stress and increasing variability in temperature, leaving plants and wildlife struggling to adapt. A permeable landscape allows species to adjust to shifts in resource availability and help ensure populations persist after extreme events worsened by climate change. For example, during wildfires and floods, a permeable landscape provides escape routes for animals seeking safety.

The welfare of humans is deeply linked to nature and access to open space. Open space has been vital to many communities during the pandemic and provided community spaces for safe socially distanced gatherings. Continued preservation and increased access will help ensure all Angelenos experience the physical and mental health benefits of nature. Native landscapes help us regulate our climate, purify our air and water, pollinate our crops and create healthy soil. In addition to the direct benefits from access, preservation of our native habitats and the species that rely on them is critical to our long-term health and wellbeing.

By supporting funding for personnel to finalize a strong wildlife ordinance, the City can join other leaders and jurisdictions in forward-thinking efforts in biodiversity and environmental health, such as Ventura County's wildlife connectivity ordinances, Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy's Natural Resource Protection Plan, Governor Newsom's 30 by 30 conservation goals, and Representative Adam Schiff's Rim of the Valley Preservation Act.

For all of these reasons, we urge you to include funding for personnel to turn the wildlife pilot into a citywide ordinance in the 2022 budget.

² Greenbelt Alliance, "The Critical Role of Greenbelts in Wildfire Resilience" (2021), available at <https://www.greenbelt.org/research/the-critical-role-of-greenbelts-in-wildfire-resilience/>.

³ Center for Biological Diversity, "Built to Burn: California's Wildlands Developments Are Playing With Fire" (Feb. 2021), available at <https://www.biologicaldiversity.org/programs/urban/pdfs/Built-to-Burn-California-Wildfire-Report-Center-Biological-Diversity.pdf>.

⁴ CAL FIRE Incidents. CAL FIRE (2015-2020), Accessed, March 15th, 2021. <https://www.fire.ca.gov/incidents>

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

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