



June 10, 2020

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
 Governor of California
 State Capitol
 Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Urgency of Maintaining Fish and Wildlife Funding in FY 20-21 budget

Dear Governor Newsom,

Thank you for your leadership during these difficult times facing our state and the world. We appreciate the challenge you face in making difficult decisions about how to contend with a significant budget deficit. We also understand that all agencies and departments are facing reduced budgets given the current circumstances. However, the nature and extent of these budget cuts must be considered in the

context of the existing budget situation facing each department and the program areas targeted by the proposed budget cuts.

In recognition of the fact that we are amid a global biodiversity crisis, the state legislature is refusing to reduce the California Department of Fish and Wildlife's (CDFW) Biodiversity Conservation Program or eliminate the Wildlife Conservation Board's Habitat Conservation Fund. Nearly 80 environmental protection, wildlife advocacy, and conservation organizations also support the legislature's decision to support CDFW and the Habitat Conservation Fund.

The Habitat Conservation Fund, which was established in Proposition 117, provides critical funding for habitat and public access projects that benefit local communities at a time when those communities need additional investments and job opportunities. Indeed, over the last thirty years, this fund has protected more than one million acres of habitat, including many areas important for mountain lion conservation. Last year, we advocated for the successful extension of the Habitat Conservation Fund for ten years, and we strongly support the legislature's rejection of your Administration's trailer bill that would undo that extension.

The legislature also rejected the proposed cut of General Funds for CDFW's Biodiversity Conservation Program. The proposed cut would reduce this critical program's General Fund support by half and result in a 30% reduction in the department's overall General Fund support. This is the largest reduction of General Fund to any of the departments within the Resources Agency.

The proposed cuts to CDFW will destabilize the department's staffing and fiscal management efforts and run counter to the goals of the ongoing Service Based Budgeting (SBB) efforts to assess and align CDFW's needs and programs. The SBB effort has revealed that CDFW is funded to meet only one-third of its mission, including law enforcement, permitting, and managing more than 600 declining species, including mountain lions, whales, and migratory birds, and more than one million acres of state lands, such as state wildlife areas.

Our organizations are deeply concerned about cutting CDFW's baseline funding because such cuts will reduce the Department's efforts to reduce conflicts between humans and wildlife; adversely impact the Department's ability to complete endangered species petition review (including Southern and Central Coast mountain lions, which were recently granted candidate status by the Fish and Game Commission); impede efforts to reduce marine mammal entanglement; reduce capacity to adaptively manage the statewide Marine Protected Area network and to sustainably manage fisheries to reduce bycatch; delay permitting timelines for environmental compliance for restoration and development projects; and slow implementation of priority Water Portfolio programs.

We urge you to work collaboratively with the Senate and the Assembly this week to provide \$33.7 million in General Fund to maintain baseline funding for CDFW's Biodiversity Conservation Program. Doing so would demonstrate your Administration's commitment to California biodiversity and continue the legacy of habitat conservation established in 1990 with the passage of Proposition 117.

Sincerely,

Pamela Flick
California Program Director
Defenders of Wildlife

Debra Chase
CEO
Mountain Lion Foundation

Paul Mason
V.P., Policy & Incentives
Pacific Forest Trust

Susan Britting, Ph.D.
Executive Director
Sierra Forest Legacy

Jennifer Clary
Water Programs Manager
Clean Water Action

Patrick Koepele
Executive Director
Tuolumne River Trust

Larry Glass
Executive Director
Safe Alternatives for our Forest Environment

Jerry Bloom
Science Director
Forest Issues Group

Howard Penn
Executive Director
Planning and Conservation League

Betsy Reifsnider
Sacramento Policy Associate
Mono Lake Committee

Chanell Fletcher
Executive Director
ClimatePlan

Sherry Pease
Executive Director
Foothill Conservancy

Steve Bardwell
President
Morongo Basin Conservation Association

Kim Kolpin
Executive Director
Bolsa Chica Land Trust

Rico Mastrodonato
Government Affairs Director
The Trust for Public Land

Kay Ogden
Executive Director
Eastern Sierra Land Trust

Claire Schlotterbeck
Executive Director
Hills for Everyone

Larry Glass
Executive Director
Northcoast Environmental Center

Michael J. Painter
Coordinator
Californians for Western Wilderness

Don Rivenes
Conservation Chair
Sierra Foothills Audubon Society

Brandon Dawson
Policy Advocate
Sierra Club California

Peter Colby
California Program Director
Western Rivers Conservancy

Sandra Schubert
Executive Director
Tuleyome

Frazier Haney
Deputy Director
The Wildlands Conservancy

Michael J. Madrigal
President
The Native American Land Conservancy

Jeannette Tuitele Lewis
President/CEO
Big Sur Land Trust

Walter T. Moore
President
Peninsula Open Space Trust

Karen Buhr
Executive Director
California Association of
Resource Conservation Districts

Mary Creasman
Chief Executive Officer
California League of Conservation Voters

Geary Hund
Executive Director
Mojave Desert Land Trust

Dennis Slater
President
Tulare Basin Wetlands Association

Gary Brennan
President
San Diego County Wildlife Federation

Aoibheann Cline
Western States Coordinator
Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation

Donald C. Martin
President
California Chapter – Wild Sheep Foundation

Adam Chavez
President
California Hawking Club

Jay Ziegler
Director, External Affairs & Policy
The Nature Conservancy

Juan Altamirano
Associate Director of Policy
Audubon California

Geoff Shester
California Campaign Director and Senior Scientist
Oceana

Michael Wellborn
President
Friends of Harbors, Beaches and Parks

Cam Tredennick
Executive Director
Sequoia Riverlands Trust

Mark Hennelly
Vice President, Government Relations
California Waterfowl Association

Don Kirby
President
Cal-Ore Wetlands and Waterfowl Council

Ricardo Ortega
General Manager
Grassland Water District

James Stone
Executive Director
Nor-Cal Guides and Sportsman's Association

Don Walgamuth
President
California Deer Association

Rick Travis
Executive Director
California Rifle & Pistol Association

Nick Jensen, Ph.D.
Lead Conservation Scientist
California Native Plant Society