

Comments on Agenda Item 6a: Termination of contract with USDA-Wildlife Services and assumption of wildlife conflict management by Mendocino Animal Care

March 22, 2021

Dear Supervisors:

This is to ask you vote to 1) terminate the County's contract with USDA-Wildlife Services; and 2) direct the County's Animal Care Services to develop a plan and implement procedures for providing nonlethal interventions aimed at resolving or at least minimizing conflicts between people and wildlife within the County.

The need to reform management of human/wildlife conflicts is recognized across much of the state, including our Fish and Wildlife agency (CDFW) increasingly focused on preserving sustainable and stable populations of native carnivores. Last year, such concerns led CDFW to impose far more restrictions on its issuance of depredation permits authorizing the killing of mountain lions in our region. In responding to this county's 2019 Environmental Impact Report on the impact of its current lethal Integrated Wildlife Damage Management Program, CDFW noted how little is known about current populations of native predators, and expressed concerns over risks of population collapse among predator species exposed to unrestricted killing by Wildlife Services.

Your adopting a locally managed and locally supervised nonlethal program, aimed at avoiding or resolving human/wildlife conflicts, could help ensure the continued presence of viable native carnivore populations across the County. Doing so may well save the County considerable taxpayer money, or at least cause that money to be spent locally rather than handed over to the federal government.

I also urge Supervisors to avoid establishing different regimens for managing conflicts involving small "nuisance" wildlife, of the sort that settle into a house or outbuilding, versus conflicts with larger species that occasionally prey on livestock or damage crops and agricultural equipment. Humboldt County is trying this bifurcated approach, having modified its contract with Wildlife Services in a way that restricts the killing of squirrels, opossums and raccoons in urban or suburban areas but leaves the federal agency free to kill wildlife in more rural areas. Recent data from Wildlife Services operations in Humboldt shows a sharp reduction in the number of smaller mammals killed by its agents, but virtually no reduction in the

number of bobcats, black bears, coyotes and gray foxes that were trapped and killed instead of being professionally deterred from predation.

Mendocino County is not a remote rural backwater where residents may be indifferent to the struggles facing native wildlife. Many County residents have expressed how living in proximity to and coexisting with native wildlife enriches their lives. They look to you, as local government leaders, to better preserve local biodiversity by establishing a program that relies on nonlethal methods and modern nonlethal technology to minimize human/wildlife conflicts.

Please end the County's funding of the federal wildlife killing business, replacing it with local rule-making and in-house management that focuses on effective nonlethal methods for reducing and managing human/wildlife conflicts.

Sincerely yours,

/s Don Lipmanson

Project Coyote Advisory Board, Mendocino Nonlethal
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