

Donald L. Lipmanson

August 15, 2021

Mendocino County Board of Supervisors
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Re: 7/17/21 meeting, Agenda item 5(e) concerning Cooperative Services Agreement (CSA) with USDA-Wildlife Services

Dear Supervisors,

Thank you for the considerable attention and thought each of you have given to the thorny issue of human-wildlife conflicts. While believing that the County's recent EIR – examining the Integrated Wildlife Damage Management Program – was scientifically deficient in several key findings, we appreciate your having funded an updated, relatively comprehensive survey of topographical and biological baselines across the County. As a former County planning commissioner, I am confident this EIR will prove useful for future planning, zoning and conservation scenarios.

Regarding the CSA with Wildlife Services, Project Coyote and its local members ask that you vote against renewing the recently expired work plan. Instead, please invoke the termination clause in your current agreement and direct counsel to give 90-day termination notice to Wildlife Services.

Ending the County's contract with Wildlife Services will not leave the public exposed to greater health and safety risks from wildlife, to higher levels of predation or more frequent intrusions of small mammals into homes and outbuildings. California law allows people to use reasonable force to defend themselves, family, domestic animals and property from harm by wild animals. Regulations authorize public health authorities to draw in local law enforcement or the County's Animal Care Department to capture or kill wildlife that appears rabid or otherwise morbidly diseased. If a mountain lion, bear or beaver presents a danger to people, kills livestock or seriously damages property, the state Department of Fish and Wildlife can help with deterrence or issue a depredation permit, which a federal agent would execute under existing contracts with the state.

Finally, anyone can hire a licensed private trapper to trap a wild animal and relocate it elsewhere on the same property, or more likely kill it. There is no basis in fact for any claims that terminating the CSA would harm people, given the lack of such evidence during the years between suspension of the program and its restoration last summer.

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The EIR revealed the shallow and outdated quality of our “knowledge” about current wildlife populations in this County. An era of intense drought and higher temperatures is affecting local wildlife populations in ways we do not know or seem prepared to measure. Wisdom and concern for the future would have us protect and preserve the County’s wildlife far better than local government is doing currently.

At least one experienced North Coast-based wildlife technician has indicated a willingness and ability to provide fee-for-service, entirely non-lethal wildlife deterrence and exclusion services around the County. Project Coyote urges the County to consider engaging with a private local or regional service along those lines.

Please be bold in adopting human-wildlife conflict management strategies that are based on findings of contemporary ecological and wildlife science, and which give native wildlife a chance to thrive at stable population levels. You can do this by ending the CSA with wildlife services and directing the County’s Animal Care Department to assume primary responsibility for managing human-wildlife conflicts.

Sincerely yours,

Donald L. Lipmanson

Don Lipmanson
Of Counsel to Project Coyote