



February 18, 2014

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Councilmember Mike Bonin
VIA Email

Re: Tree Trimming Policy (Council File 14-0019)

To Honorable Councilmember Mike Bonin,

Citizens for Los Angeles Wildlife, Inc. is a public benefit non-profit advocacy organization whose mission is to promote educate and protect the fundamental importance of wildlife, wildlife corridors and wildlife habitats everywhere. Our wildlife health is an important barometer of our larger environment. That is why we applaud your motion to explore tree trimming policies in the City of Los Angeles. We believe you are already well aware and educated about the environmental need and benefit from our city's trees and forests – a vast network of winged habitat linkages - our wildlife corridors of the sky.

Protect the Nest - Our flying wildlife, particularly raptors (eg. owls and hawks,) need healthy mature trees to survive. Tree-trimming during nesting season needs to be examined and prohibited in most cases. Caution needs to be exercised year round. Even empty nests are vital sanctuaries for migratory birds and even for other wildlife. The entire tree, not just the nest, is wildlife habitat for many bird species alike.

Enforcement Element - We are no stranger to the fact that Urban Forestry is understaffed and are saddened by how good policies on paper do not get complied with or enforced. Zoning documents with mitigations and bonding requirements are routinely ignored. That is why we are so encouraged by your request to the City Attorney for recommendations that create actual deterrence by way of monetary fines. This could be a welcomed opening for Administrative Code Enforcement (ACE) policy.

A Policy for All - While our city has established Street Trees Policies in 1993 and launched the Million Tree campaign, one need to only look at satellite maps taken over this same time period to see that we are in a decline when it comes to healthy trees and homes for our wildlife. This is a direct correlation to the Mansionization boom in the same time period. Hat-racking, topping, heading, improper tree trimming and removal is not just occurring at the hands of citizens, businesses and their contractors, there is regular improper trimming to accommodate power lines by DWP vendors. Similarly, only two weeks ago, an LAFD program removed tall ancient trees from our city's mountains without protected tree permits and Urban Forestry Policy. So, while we update and examine what tree health and maintenance policy looks like for citizens, businesses and their contractors, let's create more than just guidelines for some, let's be sure to create sustainable urban forestry policy for all -- let no person or division or department within our city be immune from sustainable urban forestry practices.

Whether the city council committee chooses the Audubon standard or others, we hope our councilmembers will consult top biologists and arborists in consideration of the wildlife and their habitats when setting these public policies for the trees. The city's focus on growth needs to always include permanent protections for our environmental heritage that can be measured by the well-being of our wildlife and their habitats.

Sincerely,

Citizens for Los Angeles Wildlife (CLAW) is a non-profit public benefit corporation. The purpose of CLAW is to act as an advocacy group to protect and restore the dwindling natural environments and open spaces of Los Angeles wildlife. CLAW's mission is to promote, educate and protect the fundamental importance of wildlife, wildlife habitats and wildlife corridors everywhere.



Alison Simard, Chairman of the Board

CC:

Councilmember Joe Buscaino

Councilmember Herb J. Wesson, Jr

Councilmember Gilberto Cedillo

David Graham-Caso