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January 20, 2015

Honorable Councilmember Felipe Fuentes
Chair, Energy and Environment Committee
Los Angeles City Council
200 N. Spring Street, Rm 455
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Re: Council Motion 14-1197-S1 – Artificial Turf in Parkways / Standard and Proposed Implementation

Honorable Councilmember Fuentes and Members of the Energy and Environment Committee:

Citizens for Los Angeles Wildlife, Inc. (CLAW) is a non-profit advocacy group whose mission is to promote, educate and protect the fundamental importance of wildlife, wildlife corridors and wildlife habitats everywhere.

While efforts by the City of Los Angeles to reduce water consumption are crucial, CLAW does not support Motion 14-1197-S1 as a viable means to water reduction since artificial turf contains toxic components which break down and enter our ecosystems and since artificial turf retains and raises heat rather than dissipating it.

The motion has no reference to what artificial turf is made of, how its components break down, and what considerations should be given to the resulting effects of such breakdown of toxic materials into our soil, water, and air. The motion cites “popularity” of use of artificial turf, which is a commercial-driven dynamic, not a science-driven indicator that should be the basis of any responsible approach to the introduction—or not—of toxin-containing materials into our ecosystems.

Since outdoor artificial turf introduces an entirely alien, toxic element into the natural world, it would create other problems while trying to help alleviate the drought problem. The use of artificial turf, as its name clearly indicates, is lifeless and would, in fact, raise the urban heat dynamics, which is egregiously counter to what Los Angeles needs for sustainable quality of life for humans and animals.

Higher urban temperatures stresses wildlife and perpetuates water resource problems. Paving over natural soil with toxin-laden, lifeless material instead of natural options that improve the vitality of our environment without causing other problems, is the opposite direction of the sustainable, environmentally-informed leadership that the City of Los Angeles should be providing in this critical time of extreme drought and climate change in general.

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Artificial turf, and the tire crumb sub-filling often used with it would not support a natural ecosystem in which wildlife have developed survival behaviors and physiologies. A material like tire crumb, for instance, breaks down into particulate matter, which, besides becoming airborne, could mix with our soil and ground water, ultimately reaching our oceans. The food chain begins with microorganisms in both soil and water. For the City of Los Angeles to promote increased use of artificial turf, the City would be infusing more and more toxins into the very base of the food chains in our precious urban ecosystems.

For these reasons, Citizens for Los Angeles Wildlife urges the Los Angeles City Council to consider other, readily available ways to replace water-consuming lawns, such as planting native shrubs and trees. These require little water, and would actually improve the health of our urban ecosystems (soil, water, and air), and would provide habitat and heat-abatement for wildlife, even at the smallest levels of the food chain.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Alison Simard", enclosed within a thin black rectangular border.

Alison Simard

Chair, Citizens for Los Angeles Wildlife