THE URBAN WILDLANDS GROUP, INC.
P.O. Box 24020, Los Angeles, California 90024-0020, Tel (310) 247-9719

June 13, 2016

Personnel and Animal Welfare Committee
Councilmember Paul Koretz, Chair
Los Angeles City Council
200 North Spring Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Re: Council File No. 16-0585 California Department of Fish and Game [*sic*] / Coyote Sightings
June 15, 2016. Item No. 4

Dear Chair Koretz and Committee Members:

The Urban Wildlands Group is a Los Angeles-based organization dedicated to the protection of species, habitats, and ecological processes in urban and urbanizing areas.

The motion under consideration correctly notes that human factors are often involved in conflicts with coyotes and it points to "lush landscaping, thick vegetation and brush, fruit trees and garden vegetables, ponds, fountains, bird feeders that attracts [sic] rodents, and even compost piles." The motion misinforms the public by overstating the importance of landscaping and completely omitting a far more important attractant of coyotes. In Los Angeles and elsewhere around the country coyotes are attracted by food left out for feral and stray cats and those cats themselves (Grubbs & Krausman 2009; Quinn 1997).

Intentional feeding by humans, either of coyotes directly, or by feeding feral and stray cats, leads to coyotes becoming aggressive and increases the risk of attacks dramatically. Scientists have documented instances where coyotes attack and kill the stray cats first, then attack children (Timm et al. 2004):

> At one location in Southern California near the site of a coyote attack, coyotes were relying on a feral cat colony as a food source. Over time, the coyotes killed most of the cats and then continued to eat the cat food placed daily at the colony source by citizens who were maintaining the cat colony (Baker & Timm 1998).

The coyote conflicts in Los Angeles cannot be solved until the problem of people leaving food outdoors for unowned animals is addressed. This would not require any new legislation; the Department of Animal Services or Police Department should simply enforce the municipal code, which does not allow anyone to "feed or in any manner provide food or cause to be fed any non-

domesticated mammalian predator including, but not limited to, coyotes, foxes, possums [*sic*], raccoons and skunks" (LAMC 53.06.5). Enforcement of this provision would be far more effective than anything suggested in the motion.

It is perhaps an oversight that feeding of animals (including feral/stray cats) was not noted in the motion, but it must be included as a mandate if the Department of Animal Services is to be asked to review its "Coyote Management Program." The Department's proposals of recent years to legalize feeding of feral/stray cats (reviewed in the MND for the Citywide Cat Program and presumably in the forthcoming EIR for that program) will increase conflicts with coyotes because they remove all limitations whatsoever on feeding of animals outdoors (including an explicit exemption for feral/stray cat feeders from LAMC 53.06.5).

If the City goes forward with its current plans to legalize feeding of feral/stray cats, then the coyote problem will continue to worsen. The City need only look to neighboring jurisdictions to see that controlling outdoor food provision is a necessary component of any plan to reduce human-coyote conflicts.

County of Los Angeles: "Remove unused pet food and water bowls at night," "Food and water should never be intentionally left out for wild animals."[1]

Calabasas and Agoura Hills: "Don't leave pet food outside, particularly at night."[2]

City of Oxnard: "Do not feed feral cats. Coyotes prey on the cats, as well as feed on cat food left out for them."[3]

City of Lakewood: "Don't feed feral cats, ducks or pigeons. They will attract coyotes to your neighborhood, putting pets at risk."[4]

City of Glendale: "Don't feed feral (wild) cats. Coyotes prey on them along with any food you leave out for them."[5]

We oppose the motion. Instead, we recommend that the Department of Animals Services be required to enforce the ban on feeding nondomesticated mammalian predators as it used to do before the political push to allow unfettered feeding of unowned outdoor cats. Nondomesticated mammalian predators (including skunks and raccoons) are always incidentally fed when people leave out food for feral cats and so this ordinance should effectively ban the feeding of feral/stray cats. It is folly to think that any progress can be made on human–coyote conflicts without addressing this issue and it would be intellectually dishonest to pursue both efforts to reduce

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[1] http://animalcare.lacounty.gov/wps/portal/acc/laws/wildlife/
[2] http://www.cityofcalabasas.com/coyotes.html; http://www.ci.agoura-hills.ca.us/residents/community-information/living-with-coyotes
[3] https://www.oxnardpd.org/bureaus/animalsafety/wild.asp
[4] http://www.lakewoodcity.org/services/request/animal/disease/coyotes.asp
[5] http://www.glendaleca.gov/government/departments/police-department/glendale-police-officers-association-gpoa/coyote-wildlife-safety

human–coyote conflicts and to legalize a TNR-Feed program for feral and stray cats as the City is apparently on a path to do.

Sincerely,

Travis Longcore, Ph.D.
Science Director

References Cited

Baker, R. O., and R. M. Timm. 1998. Management of conflicts between urban coyotes and humans in southern California. Pages 299–312 in R. O. Baker, and A. C. Crabb, editors. Proceedings of the 18th Vertebrate Pest Conference. University of California, Davis.

Grubbs, S. E., and P. R. Krausman. 2009. Observations of coyote–cat interactions. Journal of Wildlife Management **73**:683–685.

Quinn, T. 1997. Coyote (*Canis latrans*) food habits in three urban habitat types of western Washington. Northwest Science **71**:1–5.

Timm, R. M., R. O. Baker, J. R. Bennett, and C. C. Coolahan. 2004. Coyote attacks: an increasing suburban problem. Pages 47–57 in R. M. Timm, and W. P. Gorenzel, editors. Proceedings of the 21st Vertebrate Pest Conference. University of California, Davis.