



CITIZENS FOR
LOS ANGELES
WILDLIFE

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February 14, 2020

Eric Sklar, President
California Fish and Game Commission
1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1320
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Support for Petition to List Southern and Central CA Mountain Lions as “Threatened”

Dear President Sklar and Commissioners:

Citizens for Los Angeles Wildlife (CLAW) is a non-profit environmental organization concerned with the well-being of wildlife and their habitat in the city of Los Angeles and beyond. A citizenry of more than 5,000 individuals support our organization’s multiple calls for biodiverse practices and policy to benefit LA City, County, California, and the globe. CLAW strongly urges you to exercise your authority to identify our regional mountain lion populations as part of an Evolutionary Significant Unit (ESU) and Threatened under the California Endangered Species Act (CESA).

Within the boundaries of LA City are two of the six identified subpopulations of California mountain lions within the ESU: the San Gabriel/San Bernardino Mountains population and the Central Coast South (CC-S) population. The CC-S area covers the Santa Monica Mountains range, which runs through the heart of Los Angeles. This range is a highly fragmented wildland-urban interface that demonstrates textbook cases of wildlife endangerment resulting from habitat loss and fragmentation, wildfires, secondary rodenticide poisoning, genetic drift, and multiple recent mountain lion fatalities at the hands of human activity. All of these challenges exist in an area where the adult mountain lion population is estimated to be as low as between five and ten.



Hemmed in by the 101 and 5 Freeways, with only about 4000 acres of hills to traverse, the collared male mountain lion known as P-22 has gained acclaim for being the lone cougar in Griffith Park. Side by side images show a healthy P-22 alongside a P-22 sickened by rodenticide poisoning, highlighting the value of the tracking collar and ongoing study by the National Park Service (NPS).



Surrounded by the 405 and 101 Freeways and traversing at least 8000 acres of wildlands abutting the backyards of communities like Bel Air, Beverly Hills, and Laurel Canyon, is another male mountain lion who has not yet been collared. Our CLAW nature cameras have captured him at home in the hills six times between 2017 and 2020.

Perhaps the most disturbing threat to our already dwindling populations of local mountain lions is the purposeful and legal killing of cougars entitled by a depredation permit. The recent death of an NPS collared mountain lion known as P-56 would not have occurred if he had already been granted protection under CESA; California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) would not have systematically issued the depredation permit that allowed a person to purposely kill a mountain lion. As a Threatened species, it would have been CDFW's obligation to perform an evaluation of the impacts that would result from taking a reproductive male mountain lion out of the population. P-56 survived fires, poisoned food, fragmentation, cars, and other territorial males only to only be shot legally for being deemed a threat to livestock. This practice is as shameful as it is avoidable, and future atrocities like this will be averted with your vote.

As California's apex predators, mountain lions are an umbrella species that produce cascading effects throughout their ecosystem: balancing prey numbers, providing carrion for scavengers, and performing a number of other critical ecosystem services. With only two known cougars left in our local region (and no known females), CLAW and its citizenry understand that we can't afford to lose these animals and the services they provide. The survival of our local population depends upon receiving the benefit of a formal Threatened designation under CESA. For more than 100 years mountain lions have been coexisting with us Angelenos. It is now time for us humans to start coexisting with our "threatened" mountain lions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tony T.", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Tony Tucci, Chair

CLAW is a public benefit non-profit 501(c)(3) environmental organization that works to protect and restore the environments of wildlife of Los Angeles and California from dwindling open spaces. Our mission is to promote, educate and protect the fundamental importance of wildlife, wildlife habitats and wildlife corridors everywhere.