

Communication from Public

Name: Citizens for Los Angeles Wildlife
Date Submitted: 05/04/2020 09:52 AM
Council File No: 20-0600
Comments for Public Posting: Please accept this OPPOSITION to the Mayor's budget item which terminates the Wildlife Pilot Study (as described on the Supplemental Detail of Departmental Programs, Volume 1, page 131.)



CITIZENS FOR
LOS ANGELES
WILDLIFE

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May 4, 2020

Mayor Eric Garcetti
City of Los Angeles
200 N. Spring Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

RE: Opposition to 2019/20 Open Budget Termination of the Wildlife Pilot Study (CF 20-0600)

Dear Mayor Garcetti,

Citizens for Los Angeles Wildlife (CLAW) understands that the City of Los Angeles is forced to make difficult financial decisions during these unprecedented times as it prepares an emergency budget. However, we believe that it would be a travesty to remove funding for LA's Wildlife Pilot Study when a draft ordinance is only a few months away. We are deeply concerned that the City will make a mistake in this instance, prioritizing temporary economics over permanent environmental protections.

We have no time to lose. For the past six years, the Wildlife Pilot Study has supported the long-term goals of sustainability for the City of Los Angeles, which include the protection of habitat for wildlife, threatened species such as the CA mountain lion, and the health of local ecosystems for the well-being of Angelenos and beyond. CLAW, with a citizenry of 5,000 supporters, has been working closely with several City Council offices and the Planning Department for the better part of a decade to protect our Santa Monica Mountain habitats. These habitats are within a rare biodiversity hotspot that is home to diverse species including internationally celebrated P-22 mountain lion. When the City Council unanimously voted for this ordinance in 2012, Los Angeles was lauded nationally for its leadership in urban wilderness conservation. The Los Angeles Times editorial board has praised the move and there has been zero opposition. Last year, for the first time, the City hired an ecologist to lend scientific analysis to the Planning Department and to work across departments to permanently protect our fragile land. However, while we wait for the completion of the Wildlife Pilot Study, every new development approval threatens to permanently sever miles of habitat connectivity.

In April 2020, our regional mountain lions gained candidacy for protection under the California Endangered Species Act. Scientists, CA State officials, and the public have reached a consensus that our iconic mountain lions deserve candidacy as they are facing extirpation from the Santa Monica and

San Gabriel Mountains. In our City, with input from residents, staff, and the scientific community, the Wildlife Pilot Study is near the finish line of becoming frontline protection for these cougars and their habitat in the heart of Los Angeles.

Ironically, while the Green New Deal is a great step towards curbing future human impact on our environment, our City is currently woefully underequipped to conserve the dwindling habitat and threatened environment of today. One valuable benefit of an implemented Wildlife Pilot Study is that the protected “wildlife corridors” serve to broaden and mitigate with buffer zones to help protect hillside homes from wildfires while also protecting connective habitat for our local fauna. This protection of environment, life, and property is but one example of the urgency and imminent need to continue to fund the Wildlife Pilot Study.

To pull funding for the Wildlife Pilot Study would contradict the City’s goals for a ‘prosperous, livable, safe and well-run’ city as heralded in the 2019/20 open budget for the City of Los Angeles, and runs contrary to related work and investments currently supported on both city and state levels. This Wildlife Pilot Study must continue to be an important priority, even in times of crisis, because it implements the City’s immediate goals for the health and sustainability of the people, wildlife, and ecosystems of Los Angeles.

CLAW urges you to continue funding the Wildlife Pilot Study. We cannot afford to make short term decisions that will set back Los Angeles by a decade in the long term.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tony Tucci". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "T" and a distinct "T" at the end.

Tony Tucci, Chair

Cc: City Council President Nury Martinez
Councilmember Paul Krekorian (CD2)
Councilmember Bob Blumenfield (CD3)
Councilmember David Ryu (CD4)
Councilmember Paul Koretz (CD5)
Councilmember Curren Price (CD9)
Councilmember Mike Bonin (CD11)

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.