



March 1, 2019

The Honorable Eduardo Garcia, Chair
 Assembly Water, Parks, and Wildlife Committee
 1020 N Street, Room 160
 Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Support AB 273 (Gonzalez), the Wildlife Protection Act of 2019

Dear Chairman Garcia and Members of the Water, Parks, and Wildlife Committee:

On behalf of our hundreds of thousands of members and activists in California, we are writing to express our strong support for AB 273, the Wildlife Protection Act of 2019, which would end commercial trapping of California native species. This important legislation promotes healthy ecosystems, local economies and science-based wildlife management by preventing the subsidized exploitation of our natural heritage for the international fur trade. We recommend a YES vote on AB 273 when the bill is heard in the Water, Parks, and Wildlife Committee on March 12, 2019.

Fur trapping historically contributed to the extirpation of wolves and wolverines as well as severe declines in otters, fishers and marten in California, and today it still targets more than ten fur-bearing species, including gray fox, coyote, badger and mink. In 2017, over 1,500 animals were killed

statewide by the 68 commercial trappers who reported participating in the archaic industry. According to Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) reports, sale of the pelts of these animals generated less than \$10,000. The price Russian and Chinese fur companies pay for these animals pales in comparison to their value in fragile local ecosystems.

Mesocarnivores, or small to midsized mammals like the gray fox, play a critical role in maintaining biodiversity, and are important drivers of ecosystem function, structure and dynamics. However, due to concentrated trapping in constrained geographic areas and unlimited trapping quotas, local populations could suffer severe depletion in one trapping season, or even be extirpated by a single trapper in portions of the state. For example, a single trapper operating in Los Angeles County killed over 100 gray foxes in a single recent trapping season, likely depressing the local population of this species. AB 273 would conserve vulnerable species and the natural communities that depend on them by prohibiting this destructive practice.

AB 273 would also save scarce financial resources for wildlife management by ending the use of taxpayer funds to subsidize the state's commercial trapping program. The sale of 113 fur trapping licenses last year generated only approximately \$15,000 in revenue for DFW, providing only a tiny fraction of the salary of a single scientist, warden or other department employee. Proper management and enforcement of the fur trapping program would require far more than this paltry amount. Notably, when the Fish and Game Commission voted to ban commercial trapping of bobcats in 2015, the program's funding shortfall was key to that decision.

Finally, AB 273 aligns with California values by bringing wildlife management into the 21st century. Most Californians prefer to see wildlife alive rather than treated as commodities that are killed and skinned for foreign fur markets. In fact, according to a Fish and Wildlife Service report, approximately 6.73 million Californians actively participate in wildlife watching for outdoor recreation. Moreover, the minimal revenue commercial trapping generates is dwarfed by the amount wildlife watching contributes to our economy. For example, in 2011, wildlife observation, including equipment and trip-related expenses, generated more than \$3.77 billion in sustainable annual revenue to California's economy, supporting nearly 77,000 jobs, demonstrating how much more our wildlife is worth alive than killed for the benefit of a few dozen fur trappers.

AB 273 is a crucial step forward in the effort to conserve native wildlife and the rich array of ecosystems that are essential to our state's character. Not only would this vital legislation protect sensitive species from commercial exploitation, but it would bolster ecologically, economically and ethically responsible wildlife management policy, upholding California's legacy as a national conservation leader. We strongly urge you to support AB 273. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Action for Animals
Advancing Law for Animals
Animal Legal Defense Fund
Animal Welfare Institute
Battle Creek Alliance
Bear League
Born Free USA
California Council for Wildlife Rehabilitators

Citizens for Los Angeles Wildlife
Center for Biological Diversity
Defiance Canyon Raptor Rescue
Environmental Protection Information Center
Humane Society of the United States
Humane Society Veterinary Medical Association
Klamath Forest Alliance
Living with Wolves
Natural Resources Defense Council
Peace 4 Animals
Poison Free Malibu
Predator Defense
Project Coyote
Raptors are the Solution
Sierra Club California
Social Compassion in Legislation
WildCare
WildEarth Guardians
Wildlife Care of Southern California

Cc: Members of the Water, Parks, and Wildlife Committee