



MOUNTAINS RECREATION & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

Los Angeles River Center & Gardens
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Phone (323) 221-9944 Fax (323) 221-9934

July 1, 2020

California Department of Fish and Wildlife
Wildlife Branch
Attn: Esther Burkett/Mountain Lion ESU
P.O. Box 944209
Sacramento, California 94244-2090

Mountain Lion ESU

Dear Ms. Burkett:

The Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) both owns and manages tens of thousands of acres of open space in the southern California-proposed evolutionarily significant unit (ESU) for mountain lions. National Park Service (NPS) researchers from the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area have presumably provided extensive mountain lion tracking and genetic data for over a dozen collared lions in the Verdugo Mountains, Santa Monica Mountains, Simi Hills, and Santa Susana Mountains.

The MRCA wants to call attention to the lion data in Santa Monica Mountains east of the 405 freeway and in particular to the presence of lions between the 405 freeway and the 101 freeway in the Cahuenga Pass. The continuous multi-year presence of lion P-22 in Griffith Park at the eastern tip of the range is common knowledge.

The eastward crossing of the 405 freeway by P-61, and his foray tracked by NPS as far east as Benedict Canyon, shows the viability of lion habitat in the far eastern Santa Monica Mountains. The dramatic footage soon thereafter of a larger uncollared male lion treeing P-61 still east of the 405 freeway; and then P-61 being killed by a car on the freeway demonstrates both that lions cross the 405 freeway and that there is a resident male lion between the 405 freeway and 101 freeway. The non-profit Citizens for Los Angeles Wildlife (CLAW) periodically over the past two years captures clear photographs of this large uncollared male lion in the Laurel Canyon watershed often in conjunction with an adjacent coyote kill. Furthermore citizens routinely send our staff security photos of unknown uncollared lions in this zone between the 405 and 101 freeways. Those photographs are concentrated in the Laurel Canyon and Nichols Canyon watersheds. The MRCA's resident caretaker in multi-jurisdictional Franklin Canyon Park also frequently sees an uncollared lion and various remnants of kills.

In summary, virtually every small habitat block with some level of connectivity to core habitat in the aforementioned mountain ranges has the potential to provide either temporal or permanent mountain lion habitat under current conditions. However, within and between

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these mountain systems there are multiple narrow choke points subject to complete closure by individual, potentially by-right, single family homes. The listing of the subject evolutionarily significant population will help to guide lead agency's to require mitigation that prevents such blocking of existing wildlife corridors. Natural systems in these areas with some lion presence have better balanced wildlife populations.

Sincerely,

George Lange
Chairperson