VIA FACSIMILE

Action for Animals • Action for Animals Network • Alabama Wildlife Advocates • Alaska Wildlife Alliance • All-Creatures.org • Allegheny Defense Project • Alliance for Animals • Alliance for the Wild Rockies • American Lands Alliance • Animal Advocates of the Inland Northwest • Animal Defense League of Arizona • Animal Protection of New Mexico • Animal Protection Voters • Animal Welfare Institute • BARK • Bear League • Bear River Watershed Council • Big Wildlife • Biodiversity Conservation Alliance • Black Hills Mountain Lion Foundation • Blue Mountains Biodiversity Project • Born Free USA • Boulder-White Clouds Council • Buffalo Field Campaign • Californians for Western Wilderness • Cascadia Wildlands Project • Center for Biological Diversity • Center for Native Ecosystems • Christians for Environmental Stewardship • Chico For Animal Rights • Conservation Congress • Conservation Northwest • Conservation Science Institute • Cougar Fund • Creation Care Study Program • Eco-Eating • Ecological Conservation Organization • Environmental Protection Information Center • Footloose Montana • Forest Issues Group • Friends of McKay • Gila Conservation Coalition • Grand Canyon Trust • Great Old Broads for Wilderness • Great Plains Restoration Council • HEAL Heartwood • Hells Canyon Preservation Council • High Uintas Preservation Council • Higher Ground-Animal Advocacy • Humane Voters of Arizona • In Defense of Animals • Jewish Vegetarians of North America • Kentucky Heartwood • Kind Choices • Kinship Circle • Klamath Basin Audubon Society • Klamath Siskiyou Wildlands Center • Lands Council • Last Chance for Animals Arizona • League of Humane Voters • Maine Animal Coalition • MassPAWS • Mountain Cats Trust • New Dawn Montana Farm Sanctuary • New Hampshire Animal Rights League • Newton County Wildlife Association • Northwest Animal Rights Network • Options for Southern Oregon • Orange County People for Animals • Oregon Cougar Action Team • Oregon Humane Society • Oregon Wildlife Federation • Pacific Biodiversity Institute • PEACE~People for the End of Animal Cruelty and Exploitation • Power of One Animal Rights Group • Prairie Dog Pals • Progressive Animal Welfare Society (PAWS) • Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility • Public Lands Without Livestock • Ranchers for Rural Responsibility • Restoring Eden • Rocky Mountain Animal Defense • Sheep Mountain Alliance • Sierra Club • Sierra Club Tehipite Chapter • Siskiyou Project • Soda Mountain Wilderness Council • Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance • Southwest Environmental Center • St. Louis Animal Rights Team • Student Animal Legal Defense Fund • The Humane Society of the United States • The Rewilding Institute • TrapFree Oregon • Umpqua Watersheds • Utah Environmental Congress • Vegetarian Advocates • W.O.L.F. Sanctuary • Western Nebraska Resources Council • Western Watersheds Project • Western Wildlife Conservancy • Whidbey Environmental Action Network • Wild Virginia • Wild West Institute • Wilderness Watch • Wildlands CPR • Wildlife Alliance of Maine • Wildlife Watch • Wildlife Watchers • WolfWood Refuge and Adoption Center • World Temperate Rainforest Network
January 2, 2009

Dear Secretary of Agriculture nominee Vilsack:

We, the undersigned conservation, animal protection, ranching, and faith-based organizations, congratulate you on your nomination as Secretary of Agriculture. We look forward to working with you to protect the nation’s environment, wildlife, and natural ecosystems. With that in mind, we encourage you to reform the Agriculture Department's wildlife “management” policies that for too long have focused on exterminating, rather than protecting, wildlife. Specifically, we urge the Department to end Wildlife Service’s aggressive and expansive lethal control of wildlife. Representatives from our coalition also request a meeting with you to discuss these issues in more detail.

Every year, the Agriculture Department's Wildlife Services kills millions of animals, including thousands of native carnivores. The agency employs a host of cruel – and expensive and unnecessary – methods to kill coyotes, bears, cougars, wolves, and other wildlife. Animals are shot, poisoned, gassed in their dens, trapped, snared, clubbed, pursued by hounds, targeted from helicopters and planes, or lured to bait stations where they are shot. Other animals, even family dogs and cats, are unintentionally injured or killed by agency actions.1 In 2007, alone, Wildlife Services killed 2.4 million animals, including 121,565 carnivores. The agency reported it spent over $100 million in 2007 to kill wildlife, most of which was funded by taxpayers. Among those animals killed in 2007: 90,262 coyotes, 2,277 gray foxes, 2,412 red foxes, 2,090 bobcats, 1,133 cats, 552 dogs, 577 badgers, and 340 gray wolves.2

The majority of wild animals are killed by Wildlife Services to appease agribusiness, even though non-lethal measures, such as the use of guard dogs and installation of proper fencing, are often effective in preventing conflicts. The agency also kills wildlife for such minor offenses as wandering onto private property, eating pet food, and digging in gardens. Yet, it is usually irresponsible human behavior that leads to conflicts with wildlife.

Wildlife Services utilizes methods that are non-selective, haphazard, and brutal, including:

**Trapping/Snaring**

Trapping may be the most inhumane method used by Wildlife Services. The most commonly used trap is the steel-jawed leghold trap, a restraining device with spring-loaded jaws that clamp on an animal’s foot or leg when triggered. Traps can go unchecked for days during which animals may endure fractures, dislocation and/ or amputation of limbs, dehydration, exposure to severe weather, self-mutilation and predation by other animals. Snares are designed to constrict as animals struggle against them, causing asphyxiation, but may instead cut off circulation in a limb. Traps and snares are notoriously indiscriminate. Non-target species found in traps include endangered wildlife, raptors, dogs, and cats.

**Aerial gunning**

Wildlife Services uses helicopters and fixed wing aircraft to shoot animals from the air. In 2007, the agency killed over 37,000 animals using aircraft. An agency Environmental Assessment revealed many wounded animals may be left to die.3 Because Wildlife Services uses snowfall to track coyotes in early spring, agents may kill pregnant or lactating females. Deaths of the latter leave pups to starve. Aerial gunning is also used for “preventative predator control,” permitting

---

1 Though such measures would normally be considered violations of cruelty to animal statutes, Wildlife Services agents are legally permitted to use an arsenal of inhumane methods to kill wildlife. http://www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife_damage/annual%20tables/2007%20PDRs/Content/wp_c_ws_PDR_G_Piechart.shtml
2 http://www.goagro.org/
agents to shoot as many carnivores as they can prior to domestic animals entering an area. The price tag for shooting animals from the sky can be high: killing one coyote can cost $1,000.\(^5\)

**Poisoning**

Wildlife Services uses two toxins to kill predators: Sodium Monofluoroacetate (aka Compound 1080), a rat poison developed during World War II, and sodium cyanide. To distribute 1080, the agency uses Livestock Protection Collars – rubber bladders attached to the neck of a goat or sheep that, when pierced, releases 1080. 1080 is so lethal a single teaspoon can kill 100 people, and it is persistent in the environment. The agency also sets M-44 devices, spring-loaded, baited mechanisms that release sodium cyanide into the mouth of any animal who disturbs the device. Sodium cyanide and 1080 present serious national security risks. The FBI has listed both as “super poisons” that are “most likely to be used by terrorists or for malicious intent.”

**Denning**

Denning is the practice of tracking carnivores to their dens and then killing pups inside. Poisonous gas canisters are placed in dens to asphyxiate pups. Government agents dig pups out and shoot, club, or decapitate them. Pups have also been burned alive in their den.

**Carnivores Contribute to Biological Diversity and Ecosystem Function**

Wildlife Services’ lethal control programs ignore the importance of carnivores. As “keystone species,” carnivores play a pivotal role in sustaining ecological integrity and preserving species diversity. For example, large carnivores regulate deer and elk, as well as smaller mammal populations. The disappearance of top carnivores triggers the loss of other species and the intricate connections among the remaining residents begin to unravel.\(^6\)

Many non-lethal solutions are less expensive and more effective than killing. Ranchers who use guard dogs, llamas, burros, or even mixing cows with sheep report lower or no predation problems. Nighttime penning, penning during lambing and calving season, and removing animal carcasses from pastures also reduce conflicts. In addition, strobes and sirens are effective for preventing predation. Monies spent on lethal control would be better used to educate and aid ranchers, farmers, and others to upgrade their fencing or assist them with utilizing non-lethal techniques. Eliminating or reducing domestic animal grazing on public lands would also sharply reduce encounters with wildlife.\(^7\)

Most Americans support conserving a diversity of native wildlife.\(^8\)\(^9\) The activities of Wildlife Services are out of step with those values. We urge you to end the agency’s lethal control programs. The public and its trust resources would be far better served by shifting Wildlife Services’ resources away from expansive killing of animals to providing public education about wildlife and employing non-lethal, humane measures to prevent conflicts. Such reforms would provide critical safeguards for communities and our nation’s wild heritage.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

---

5 http://www.goagro.org/
Brian Vincent, Communications Director
Big Wildlife
PO Box 489
Williams, OR 97544
541-846-1352 (office)
604-618-1030 (cell)
brian@bigwildlife.org
www.bigwildlife.org

Michael J. Robinson, Conservation Advocate
Center for Biological Diversity
P.O. Box 53166
Pinos Altos, NM 88053
575-534-0360
michaelr@biologicaldiversity.org
www.biologicaldiversity.org

**On behalf of:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>City</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>Contact Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dave Bemel</td>
<td>Action for Animals</td>
<td>Seattle, WA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary Zoeter</td>
<td>Action for Animals Network</td>
<td>Alexandria, VA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Toppenberg</td>
<td>Alaska Wildlife Alliance</td>
<td>Anchorage, AK</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ryan Talbott</td>
<td>Allegheny Defense Project</td>
<td>Pittsburgh, PA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lynn Pauly</td>
<td>Alliance for Animals</td>
<td>Madison WI</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael Garrity</td>
<td>Alliance for the Wild Rockies</td>
<td>Helena, MT</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frank Hoffman</td>
<td>All-Creatures.org</td>
<td>Athens NY</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Randi Spivak</td>
<td>American Lands Alliance</td>
<td>Washington, DC</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barbara C. Anderlik</td>
<td>Animal Advocates of the Inland Northwest</td>
<td>Liberty Lake, WA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephanie Nichols-Young</td>
<td>Animal Defense League of Arizona</td>
<td>Phoenix, AZ</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elisabeth Jennings</td>
<td>Executive Director</td>
<td>Albuquerque, NM</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animal Protection of New Mexico</td>
<td>and</td>
<td>Albuquerque, NM</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alex P. Brown</td>
<td>Executive Director</td>
<td>Bark</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ann Bryant</td>
<td>Executive Director</td>
<td>Homewood, CA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dan Miller</td>
<td>Executive Director</td>
<td>Bear River Watershed Council</td>
<td>Richmond, UT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erik Molvar</td>
<td>Executive Director</td>
<td>Biodiversity Conservation Alliance</td>
<td>Laramie, WY</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Sharon Seneczko</td>
<td>President</td>
<td>Black Hills Mountain Lion Foundation</td>
<td>Custer, SD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karen Coulter</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>Blue Mountains Biodiversity Project</td>
<td>Fossil, Oregon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicole G. Paquette</td>
<td>Director of Legal and Government Affairs</td>
<td>Born Free USA</td>
<td>Sacramento, CA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lynne K. Stone</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>Boulder-White Clouds Council</td>
<td>Ketchum ID</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mike Mease</td>
<td>Campaign Coordinator</td>
<td>Buffalo Field Campaign</td>
<td>West Yellowstone, MT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael J. Painter</td>
<td>Coordinator</td>
<td>Californians for Western Wilderness</td>
<td>San Francisco, CA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Josh Laughlin</td>
<td>Conservation Director</td>
<td>Cascadia Wildlands Project</td>
<td>Eugene, OR</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joshua Pollock</td>
<td>Acting Director</td>
<td>Center for Native Ecosystems</td>
<td>Denver, CO</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tim Stevens</td>
<td>President</td>
<td>Christians for Environmental Stewardship</td>
<td>Livingston, MT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shannon York</td>
<td>President</td>
<td>Chico For Animal Rights</td>
<td>Chico, CA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denise Boggs</td>
<td>Executive Director</td>
<td>Conservation Congress</td>
<td>Lewistown, MT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitch Friedman</td>
<td>Executive Director</td>
<td>Conservation Northwest</td>
<td>Bellingham, WA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John R. Cannon</td>
<td>Ph.D., Director</td>
<td>Conservation Science Institute</td>
<td>Front Royal, VA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sara Carlson</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>Cougar Fund</td>
<td>Jackson, WY</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chris Elisara</td>
<td>Ph.D., Director</td>
<td>Creation Care Study Program</td>
<td>Julian, CA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Dan Brook</td>
<td></td>
<td>Eco-Eating</td>
<td>San Jose, CA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rob Fisher</td>
<td>Executive Director</td>
<td>Ecological Conservation Organization</td>
<td>Little Rock, AR</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scott Greacen</td>
<td>Executive Director</td>
<td>Environmental Protection Information Center</td>
<td>Arcata CA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anja Heister</td>
<td>Executive Director</td>
<td>Footloose Montana</td>
<td>Florence, MT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Rivenes</td>
<td>Executive Director</td>
<td>Forest Issues Group</td>
<td>Nevada City, CA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scott Staats</td>
<td>Executive Director</td>
<td>Friends of McKay</td>
<td>Bend, OR</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allyson Siwik</td>
<td>Executive Director</td>
<td>Gila Conservation Coalition</td>
<td>Silver City, NM 88061</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bill Hedden</td>
<td>Executive Director</td>
<td>Grand Canyon Trust</td>
<td>Moab, UT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veronica Egan</td>
<td>Executive Director</td>
<td>Great Old Broads for Wilderness</td>
<td>Durango, CO</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jarid Manos</td>
<td>Founder/CEO</td>
<td>Great Plains Restoration Council</td>
<td>Fort Worth, TX</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andy Mahler</td>
<td>Network Coordinator</td>
<td>Heartwood</td>
<td>Paoli IN</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greg Dyson</td>
<td>Executive Director</td>
<td>Hells Canyon Preservation Council</td>
<td>La Grande, OR</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dick Carter</td>
<td>Coordinator</td>
<td>High Uintas Preservation Council</td>
<td>Hyrum, UT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria Nichols</td>
<td>Founding Director</td>
<td>Higher Ground-Animal Advocacy and Alabama Wildlife Advocates</td>
<td>Birmingham, AL</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angela Smith</td>
<td>National Coordinator</td>
<td>HEAL</td>
<td>Seattle, WA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Michael Markarian  
Executive Vice President, External Affairs  
The Humane Society of the United States  
Washington, DC 20037

Karen Michael, Board Member  
Humane Voters of Arizona  
Phoenix, AZ

Matt Rossell, Northwest Outreach Coordinator  
In Defense of Animals  
Portland, OR

Richard H. Schwartz, President  
Jewish Vegetarians of North America  
Staten Island, NY

Jim Scheff, Directory  
Kentucky Heartwood  
Versailles, KY

Maura McCormick, Founder  
Kind Choices  
Dayton, OH

Brenda Shoss, President/Founder  
Kinship Circle  
St. Louis, MO

Darrel Samuels, President  
Klamath Basin Audubon Society  
Klamath Falls, OR

Stephanie Tidwell, Executive Director  
Klamath Siskiyou Wildlands Center  
Ashland, OR

Mike Peterson, Executive Director  
Lands Council  
Spokane, WA

Shaynie Aero, Co-Director  
Last Chance for Animals Arizona  
Mesa, AZ

Richard G. Mc Lellan MD, Director  
League of Humane Voters  
California Chapter  
Los Angeles, CA

Laurie Ulrich Fuller, Director  
League of Humane Voters  
Central Pennsylvania Chapter  
Bausman, PA

Beth Gallie, President  
Maine Animal Coalition  
Portland, ME

Beverly Alba, President  
MassPAWS  
Winthrop, MA

Tom Huhnerkoch DVM, RN  
Mountain Cats Trust  
Lead, SD

Susan Eakins, Director  
New Dawn Montana Farm Sanctuary  
Stevensville, MT

Linda Dionne, President  
New Hampshire Animal Rights League  
Concord, NH

Dennis Larson, Board Member  
Newton County Wildlife Association  
Parthenon, AR

Peter Keller, Board Member  
Northwest Animal Rights Network  
Seattle WA

Crystal McMahon, Program Director  
Options for Southern Oregon  
Ashland, OR

Dina Kourda, Director  
Orange County People for Animals  
Yorba Linda, CA

Jayne Miller  
Oregon Cougar Action Team  
Turner, Oregon

Sharon M. Harmon, Executive Director  
Oregon Humane Society  
Portland, OR

Paul Loney, President  
Oregon Wildlife Federation  
Portland, OR
Peter Morrison, Executive Director
Pacific Biodiversity Institute
Winthrop, WA

Zelda Penzel, President
PEACE—People for the End of Animal Cruelty and Exploitation
East Hampton, NY

Susanne Schraeder, President
Power of One Animal Rights Group
Fort Myers, FL

Yvonne Boudreaux, President
Prairie Dog Pals
Albuquerque, NM

Mary Leake Schilder, Manager
Progressive Animal Welfare Society (PAWS)
Seattle, WA

Jeff Ruch, Executive Director
Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility
Washington, DC

Mike Hudak, Director
Public Lands Without Livestock
Malibu, CA

Michael Moss, Founder
Ranchers for Rural Responsibility
Jacksonville, OR

Peter Ilyn, Founder
Restoring Eden
La Center, WA

David R. Parsons, Conservation Biologist
The Rewilding Institute
Albuquerque, NM

Mike Stabler, Executive Director
Rocky Mountain Animal Defense
Denver, CO 80218-0903

Mare E Florentino, President
St. Louis Animal Rights Team
St. Louis, MO

Hilary White, Executive Director
Sheep Mountain Alliance
Telluride, CO

Liz Walsh, Chair
Wildlife, Endangered Species Committee
Sierra Club
Washington, DC

Charles M. Ashley
Sierra Club Tehipite Chapter
Tollhouse, CA

Shane Jimerfield, Executive Director
Siskiyou Project
Grants Pass, OR

Dave Willis
Soda Mountain Wilderness Council
Ashland, OR

Scott Groene, Executive Director
Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance
Moab, UT

Kevin Bixby, Executive Director
Southwest Environmental Center
Las Cruces, NM

Tara Zuardo, Co-Director
Student Animal Legal Defense Fund
Portland, OR

Walter Sykes, Founder
TrapFree Oregon
Joseph, OR

Cindy Haws, President
Umpqua Watersheds
Roseburg, OR

Kevin Mueller, Executive Director
Utah Environmental Congress
Salt Lake City, UT

Stephen R. Kaufman, M.D., President
Vegetarian Advocates
Cleveland, OH

Buffalo Bruce, Staff Ecologist
Western Nebraska Resources Council
Chadron, NE

Jon Marvel, Executive Director
Western Watersheds Project
Hailey, ID
Kirk Robinson, PhD, JD, Director
Western Wildlife Conservancy
Salt Lake City, UT

Arianne Edain, Coordinator
Whidbey Environmental Action Network
Langley, WA

Eric Gilchrest, President
Wild Virginia
Charlottesville, VA

Matthew Koehler, Executive Director
Wild West Institute
Missoula, MT

George Nickas, Executive Director
Wilderness Watch
Missoula, MT

Bethanie Walder, Executive Director
Wildlands CPR
Missoula, MT

Daryl DeJoy, Executive Director
Wildlife Alliance of Maine
Bangor, ME

Anne Muller, President
Wildlife Watch
New Paltz, NY

Jerry Black, Founder
Wildlife Watchers
Missoula, MT

Frank Wendland, Cofounder
W.O.L.F. Sanctuary
La Porte, CO

Paula Watson, Co-Founder/Co-Director
WolfWood Refuge and Adoption Center
Ignacio, CO

Pat Rasmussen, Coordinator
World Temperate Rainforest Network
Olympia, WA