To the Nevada Board of Wildlife Commissioners:

We, the undersigned scientists – with collective expertise in conservation biology, ecology, population dynamics, wildlife management, and for many of us herpetology—urge the Nevada Board of Wildlife Commissioners to institute a permanent ban on the commercial collection of reptiles.

Nevada has one of the most significant levels of herpetological biodiversity in the western United States. These snakes and lizards are an important part of the desert food web, consuming insects and other invertebrates while acting as prey for mid- to upper-level predators. They are an integral part of Nevada’s vibrant desert ecosystems.

Globally, herpetofauna face numerous stressors including climate change, overexploitation, and habitat loss, which is driving localized extinctions and may be foretelling of broader declines. Research also shows that there are environmental impacts associated with the practice of commercial collecting itself, degrading habitat for the remaining animals.

NDOW has presented compelling data that collection numbers have been very significant over the past 30 years—resulting in the loss of nearly half a million reptiles from Nevada’s public lands. These data also indicate that reptile density may be going down in places that have been heavily collected, and as a result the impacts from collecting are spreading to previous unexploited areas.

Nevada is the only state in the Western U.S. to permit this practice, making it an outlier in managing its wildlife resources. In light of the unique reptile community in the state, the indicators that commercial collection may be impacting population levels, and the broader context of threats to reptiles, we encourage the Nevada Board of Wildlife Commissioners to ban the practice of commercial collection of reptiles.

Sincerely,

Kenneth Nussear, Ph.D.
Professor of Geography and Ecology, Evolution, and Conservation Biology
University of Nevada, Reno

James Hanken, Ph.D.
Alexander Agassiz Professor of Zoology
Harvard University
Curator of Herpetology, and Director, Museum of Comparative Zoology
Eric T. Simandle, Ph.D. (University of Nevada, Reno)
Associate Professor of Natural Sciences
Paul Smith's College

Robert E. Espinoza, Ph.D. (University of Nevada, Reno)
Professor of Biology
California State University, Northridge

Kayla Bieser, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of Biology
Nevada State College

Marion Preest, Ph.D.
Pritzker Family Foundation Professor of Biology
Claremont McKenna, Pitzer, and Scripps College

Glenn R. Stewart, Ph.D.
Professor Emeritus of Zoology and Environmental Science
California State Polytechnic University, Pomona

David B. Wake, Ph.D.
Professor of the Graduate School in Integrative Biology
Curator, Museum of Vertebrate Zoology
University of California - Berkeley

Dr. Andrew Durso, Ph.D.
Ecologist
Max Planck Institute for Biogeochemistry, Germany

Ghislaine Guyot Jackson, Ph.D.
Professor of Ecology and Conservation Biology of Reptiles
Keiser University-Tallahassee
Editor in Chief, herpetology journal Cheloniens

Charles Knapp, Ph.D.
Vice President of Conservation Research
John G. Shedd Aquarium
Chicago, IL
Samuel S. Sweet, Ph.D.
Professor, Department of Ecology, Evolution, and Marine Biology
University of California, Santa Barbara

Elliott Jacobson, D.V.M., Ph.D.
Professor Emeritus of Zoological Medicine
University of Florida

William H Heyborne, Ph.D.
Associate Professor, Biology
Southern Utah University

Tracey K. Brown, Ph.D.
Professor, Dept. of Biological Sciences
California State University, San Marcos

Jonathan Richmond, Ph.D.
U.S. Geological Survey, Western Ecological Research Center

Russell Burke, Ph.D.
Professor of Biology
Hofstra University

Thomas A. Wake, Ph.D.
Director, Zooarchaeology Laboratory
Assistant Adjunct Professor of Anthropology
University of California – Los Angeles

Rulon W. Clark, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Biology
San Diego State University

Marina M. Gerson, Ph.D.
Biological Sciences
Stanislaus State University, California

James F. Parham, Ph.D.
Professor
Cal State Fullerton
Jennifer Edmonds, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, Environmental Microbiology
Nevada State College

Barbara Ann Pytel, Ph.D.
Senior Lecturer, Biology
Union College

Amanda M. Sparkman, PhD
Associate Professor of Biology
Westmont College

Janine Perlman, Ph.D.
Wildlife Nutrition Consultants

Amy Eisenberg, Ph.D.
Researcher, University of Arizona
Hopi Tribe Cultural Preservation Office

Taylor Edwards, Ph.D.
Herpetologist, Conservation Biologist

Dr. Guntram Deichsel
Herpetologist
Biberach an der Riss, Germany

Dr. Elisabeth Bechmann
Austria

Jason Wallace, M.S. - Biology
Manager/Herpetologist
California State University- Desert Studies Center

James Kamstra, M.E.S. – Environmental Studies
Senior Ecologist, AECOM

Chris Smith, M.S. – Wildlife Conservation and Management
Biologist, Round River Conservation
Tarun Nair, M.Sc. - Wildlife Biology
Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment

Robert Furtek, M.S. – Biology
Former NDOW field technician

Joe Ehrenberger, M.S. - Ecology
Adaptation Environmental Services

James Morio, M.S. – Biology
Amber Ecological Consultants

Ben Stegenga, M.S. - Wildlife and Fisheries Biology
Herpetologist with The Orianne Society

Rebecca Kipp, M.S. – Applied Ecology
Wildlife Biologist / Herpetologist

Judy Haggard, M.A. - Biology

Ann DeBolt, M.S. – Plant Biology
Idaho Herpetological Society member since 1992

Norma J. Engberg, M.S. – Biology
Independent Desert Tortoise Researcher

Melissa Amarello, M.S. - Biology
Co-founder and Director of Education, Advocates for Snake Preservation

Zachary A. Cava, M.A. – Biology
Wildlife Biologist, Herpetology

Barton C Huber, DVM
Animal Medical Center of Corona

Todd Wolf, DVM, ABVP
Companion Animal Hospital & Avian/Exotic Clinic

Joe Michaelson, DVM
Association of Reptilian and Amphibian Veterinarians
Alex Krohn, Ph.D. Candidate – Biology/Herpetology
University of California- Berkeley

Scott Buchanan, Ph.D. Candidate – Biology/Herpetology
University of Rhode Island