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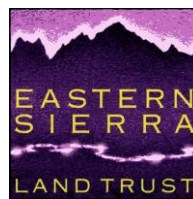
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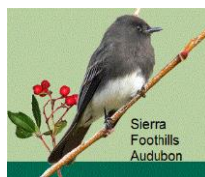
Central Coast Urban Forests Council



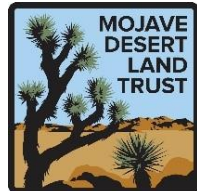
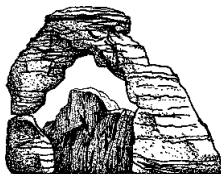
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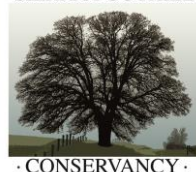
FRIENDS OF THE INYO SINCE 1986

PLANNING AND CONSERVATION LEAGUE

SIERRA-FOOTHILL



LEGACY The Landscape Connection





May 8, 2020

Honorable Philip Ting, Chair
 Assembly Budget Committee
 State Capitol
 Sacramento, CA 95814

Honorable Holly Mitchell, Chair
 Senate Budget Committee
 State Capitol
 Sacramento, CA 95814

Honorable Richard Bloom, Chair
 Assembly Budget Subcommittee 3
 State Capitol
 Sacramento, CA 95814

Honorable Bob Wieckowski
 Senate Budget Subcommittee 2
 State Capitol
 Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Habitat Conservation Fund Budget Trailer Bill – STRONG OPPOSE

Dear Chairs Ting, Mitchell, Bloom and Wieckowski,

On behalf of the undersigned organizations we are writing to oppose the proposed budget trailer bill that seeks to reinstate the July 2020 sunset date for the Habitat Conservation Fund (HCF), ending important funding for local park districts, state agencies, and crucial habitat conservation programs at the Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB) that support on the ground projects that provide important source of jobs to local communities. This proposal is also a retreat from the administration’s and Legislature’s commitment to stable, ongoing support for conservation, biodiversity and public access to parks in California and eliminates a critical funding source that supports multiple agencies and important conservation programs.

In light of the current COVID-19 situation facing our state, it is more important than ever to continue successful funding programs that quickly get dollars out of the door to local communities, nonprofits, and state and local agencies. The Habitat Conservation Fund has a 30 year track record of providing critical funding across California for a variety of projects that provide resiliency to the effects of climate change, create new jobs, increase public access to communities, and support a tourism economy.

Just last year, the Legislature and Governor Newsom agreed to extend the HCF sunset by ten years, thereby providing \$30 million each year for important conservation programs and state and local agencies. Per Proposition 117’s text, HCF monies are allocated annually to local park districts, Department of Parks and Recreation, State Coastal Conservancy, Tahoe Conservancy and the Wildlife Conservation Board.

The HCF has been a highly effective and extremely popular program for implementing a wide range of vital conservation efforts throughout the entire state. It has provided a necessary, consistent and reliable revenue source for conservation efforts that have benefitted California’s diverse communities and biodiversity. Since 1990, the HCF has protected more than one million acres of wildlife habitat and has provided significant funding for parks and conservancies.

Unfortunately, the current budget proposal attempts to end the Habitat Conservation Fund, extinguish the commitment last year by the Legislature and Newsom administration to provide \$300 million over the next ten years for the agencies and programs funded by the HCF, and revert those funds to the General Fund. Therefore, not only does this budget proposal end crucial funding for WCB programs as well as local park districts, State Parks, Coastal Conservancy and Tahoe Conservancy, it also eliminates the administration's commitment to provide \$300 million in conservation and public access funding over the next decade at time when that funding could be an important part of economic stimulus efforts.

As we have noted in past communications, the administration appears to believe that this budget trailer bill language can be approved without a 4/5 vote by the Legislature. However, a close reading of Proposition 117's language shows that the Legislature is only authorized to extend or delete the sunset date with a majority vote. As dictated by the terms of Proposition 117, any change not expressly permitted by the statutory language would require a 4/5 vote by the Legislature. What's more, Section 8 of Proposition 117 expressly requires that any amendment of the act to be consistent with and furthering of the purposes of the initiative. Extending the HCF for ten years last year was clearly consistent with and furthering the purposes; any attempt to reverse the action taken last year would be inconsistent and would violate the act's purposes. And finally, Section 7 also expressly states that "the Legislature shall not reallocate the funds allocated by Sections 2787 and 2788 of the Fish and Game Code." Thus, the administration's proposal in the trailer bill language is simply unlawful.

Given these concerns and questions, we respectfully ask that the Legislature reject the HCF Budget Trailer bill proposal to allow for this funding to be a part of our state's economic stimulus and environmental protection efforts.

Sincerely,

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California Program Director
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CEO
Mountain Lion Foundation

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Bolsa Chica Land Trust

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