



CITIZENS' STATEMENT OF SUPPORT

For

Recovering the Jaguar as a Native Species of the United States

Early in 2010, the US Fish & Wildlife Service announced that it will prepare a recovery plan for the jaguar. We support this decision and call for a conservation program led by the Service to restore the jaguar within its historic range in the United States.

The jaguar has inhabited North America for over 500,000 years. In historic times, it lived in California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas, with some reports from Louisiana and elsewhere. Jaguars were decimated by hunting and by efforts to exterminate wild predators. Recent reports of the great cat have been limited to southern Arizona and New Mexico.

We strongly urge the Service to undertake a jaguar recovery program that includes the following essential actions:

1. Protect habitat linkages. As a large, mobile animal, the jaguar needs areas of relatively open country that connect its primary range, such as mountains, canyons, and other remote terrain. These "habitat linkages" are threatened by land development, urban sprawl, highways without wildlife crossings, and other factors that radically change the natural character of the land. The Service should begin a comprehensive effort with counties, highway departments, public land managers, private landowners, conservation organizations, and others to ensure that "travel corridors" for the jaguar are protected.
2. Conserve our wild lands. The United States has large blocks of wildlife habitat that can provide the jaguar adequate food, water, areas for seclusion and security, sites for breeding and rearing of offspring, and other resources. These areas typically encompass our national forests and other public lands. Many of these lands are being degraded or destroyed by mining, road construction, energy development, off-road vehicles, overgrazing, and other factors. The Service should lead a concerted effort to protect the

integrity of “core habitat areas” for the jaguar. Wild land areas as well as connecting habitat linkages needed for jaguar recovery in the U.S. should receive special conservation attention by the Service as “critical habitat.”

3. Ensure that jaguars can roam freely between the US and Mexico. The construction of fencing and other activities along the international border with Mexico have resulted in a barrier to jaguar movement between the two countries. The Service and the U.S. Department of the Interior should engage the U.S. Department of Homeland Security in recovery planning to limit barrier fencing and avoid construction sites and high intensity activities in areas that may be traversed by jaguars.

4. Pursue joint recovery efforts with Mexico. The conservation and expansion of a small jaguar population in Sonora, Mexico (located about 130 miles south of the border) is very important to the recovery of the jaguar in the U.S. The Service should work closely with Mexico on how best to conserve contiguous jaguar habitat and protect jaguars from poachers in the border region. We encourage the Service to propose an international conservation area for the borderlands that would protect the jaguar and other wildlife while enhancing relations and security between our two countries.

5. Develop the option to rebuild jaguar numbers and range through reintroduction. Reintroduction of endangered species in order to rebuild depleted or extinguished populations is a common practice in wildlife conservation today. The Service should develop plans for jaguar reintroduction in the event that significant natural migration of jaguars from Mexico, particularly females, appears unlikely in the foreseeable future.

6. Act now. We call upon the Service to provide extraordinary leadership and move with utmost urgency in developing and implementing a jaguar recovery program. The jaguar was officially recognized as an endangered species 13 years ago. A recovery program with habitat protection for the jaguar is long overdue.

To endorse this statement, contact Dr. Tony Povilitis email: tpoviltis@lifenetnature.org. Please include your full name, organization or business you represent (if any), mailing address, email address (optional), and date of endorsement.