



July 7, 2008

The Honorable Janet Napolitano
Governor of Arizona
1700 West Washington
Phoenix, Arizona 85007

Dear Governor Napolitano,

As you know, the jaguar still roams the southern part of Arizona and New Mexico. But precious few animals remain. The jaguar can only make a comeback in the Southwest if people protect the wild and open country it needs. I was instrumental in having the jaguar placed on the US endangered species list over a decade ago. This resulted in federal protection from hunting. Since that time, protecting habitat for jaguar has become an especially important challenge with Arizona becoming the fastest growing state.

My involvement with jaguar conservation began about 15 years ago not long after a jaguar had been killed within a horse ride of our home near Willcox, Arizona. Since then I've encouraged state and federal wildlife agencies to fulfill their responsibilities for protecting jaguar habitat so that population recovery would be possible.

A state-led group called the Jaguar Conservation Team (JAGCT) was established in 1997 by the Arizona Game and Fish Department. It pledged to undertake jaguar habitat conservation in its founding plans and agreements. Unfortunately, it failed to follow through on its commitments, stymied internally by ideological opposition, goal substitutions, and other factors (please see the enclosed article for a fuller explanation). Over the years, I worked with and offered technical support to JAGCT in what became an unsuccessful bid to have it advance jaguar habitat conservation. Last March, my wife and I wrote a letter (copy enclosed) to Arizona Game and Fish Department officials responsible for JAGCT inquiring if they ever intended to pursue habitat conservation work. We did not receive a reply.

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Partially out of frustration with JAGCT, I have started a project called the Jaguar Habitat Campaign. It is intended to help draw attention to the many threats to jaguar habitat and to the opportunities to conserve it (please visit our website <http://jaguarhabitatusa.wordpress.com>).

Still, I firmly believe that actions by private conservationists cannot substitute for the essential work that the Arizona Game and Fish Department and other public natural resource agencies must do to safeguard jaguar habitat.

So I ask your help in urging the Arizona Game and Fish Department to fulfill its responsibility and commitment to advance the conservation of jaguar habitat in Arizona. I am sending a similar letter to William H. McLean (Chairman, Arizona Game and Fish Commission), Bob Hernbrode (member, Arizona Game and Fish Commission, Tucson), and Larry D. Voyles, Director AGFD.

With the right leadership, I see a great opportunity for the Department to lead conservation planning on a scale sufficient to recover the jaguar in Arizona. Safeguarding habitat for this sensitive, wide-ranging species is a sure investment for protecting more broadly Arizona's rich natural heritage!

Sincerely,

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