

For Immediate Release

April 16, 2009

Contact: Dr. Tony Povilitis (406) 600-4803

Government Shrugs as Wild Jaguars Disappear from the United States

TUCSON, *Arizona* – With the recent death of the last known wild jaguar in the U.S., the Arizona-based Jaguar Habitat Campaign today called on state officials to work with the US Fish & Wildlife Service to restore the species for future generations of Americans.

Dr. Anthony Povilitis, a wildlife biologist who directs the Campaign, called upon Larry Voyles, director of the Arizona Game and Fish Department, to commit his agency to the same kind of effort being made to recover other endangered wildlife such as the California condor and the black-footed ferret.

Jaguars historically roamed from the southern United States to South America. Today they face extinction in most areas, including the southwestern US and Mexico.

The letter of appeal comes on the heels of the widely publicized death of an Arizona jaguar known as Macho B. The animal had to be euthanized days after being caught in a snare trap set by the game agency for research purposes.

"In my lifetime, at least 11 jaguars have been killed in Arizona, and others in nearby Mexico. It's due time our Arizona Game and Fish Department demonstrate new leadership by encouraging, supporting, and collaborating with the US Fish & Wildlife Service on jaguar recovery work," Povilitis said. The U.S. District Court of Arizona recently ruled that the Service uphold the US Endangered Species Act by considering a formal Recovery Plan for the jaguar. The jaguar was listed as an endangered species in the U.S. in 1997, thanks to a petition by Dr. Povilitis and legal prodding by conservation organizations.

The letter also asks Mr. Voyles to withdraw his agency's draft policy called a Jaguar Conservation Assessment for Arizona, New Mexico, and Northern Mexico. In explaining the request, Povilitis said "that misguided document is driven by people who for over a decade have fiddled under the banner of a 'jaguar conservation team' while staunchly opposing jaguar recovery. I know, I tried to work with them. And now the last known wild jaguar in the U.S. is dead, a victim of this same stone age attitude about wildlife management. We desperately need bold leadership from the Arizona Game and Fish Department to restore the jaguar -- or the great cat will be gone forever."

Public review of that policy ends this Friday. "There is a real danger it could be finalized, unless Mr. Voyles directly intervenes", said Andrea Gaines, a board member of the Jaguar Campaign. "That would be tragic for Arizona and for the nation. We cannot stand by idly and let the American jaguar vanish."

The letter of appeal is being sent also to the Governors of Arizona and New Mexico, and to members of Congress.

###

The Jaguar Habitat Campaign is a project of Life Net Nature, a non-profit research and conservation organization working in the Southwest, Hawaii, and South America. For more information on Life Net, visit www.lifenetnature.org. Its jaguar campaign can be reached at: <http://jaguarhabitatusa.wordpress.org>