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PRIORITY MAIL-REPLY REQUESTED

May 20, 2009

Secretary Janet Napolitano
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20528

Content in Brief

Mitigation to offset border fence impacts on the endangered jaguar needs to be part of a well-planned, scientifically sound recovery program. Please discuss the need for a Jaguar Recovery Plan with Secretary Ken Salazar, while considering our suggestion for a bi-national Borderlands Conservation Area.

Dear Secretary Napolitano:

Mr. Eugene H. Scheid of the US Customs and Border Protection (Office of Finance, CBP) kindly wrote to us on March 30, 2009 in response to our letter to you (1-30-09) concerning the impact of border fencing on the critically endangered jaguar in the US Southwest and Sonora, Mexico.

Border Impacts Mitigation and Jaguar Recovery Planning

Mr. Scheid indicated that construction of pedestrian-type fencing along the US-Mexico border would be completed (to our great disappointment) but that mitigation of its impacts on the jaguar were anticipated through a collaborative effort by DHS/CBP and the US Department of the Interior (DOI). Mr. Scheid's letter did not specify mitigation measures and was apparently mistaken as to the area extent of pedestrian-type fencing. (I am seeking clarification on these specifics in a follow up to Mr. Schied and CBP's Environmental Division).

I am writing to you about a higher policy decision needed to ensure that mitigation measures for border related impacts on the jaguar are biologically sound, cost effective, and guided by species recovery planning under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). As

you may know, the jaguar is a federally endangered species that is currently without an ESA Recovery Plan (because of a poor decision lingering from the former Bush Administration).

Please discuss the need for a Jaguar Recovery Plan with Interior Secretary Salazar. Options for mitigation are complex and efforts by DHS/CBP should be integrated into a well-planned, scientifically sound recovery program.

Proposed US-Mexico Borderlands Conservation Area

In our earlier letter, we suggested the creation of an international conservation area along the Arizona/New Mexico and Mexico Border to promote a new era of bi-national partnership and problem-solving. Mr. Scheid indicated that while “CBP could certainly participate as a cooperating agency in any effort to establish an international conservation area” the initiative would have to come from the Department of the Interior (DOI) and perhaps Congress.

Please discuss this idea with Secretary Ken Salazar and President Barack Obama. Our proposal is worth careful consideration as it would contribute immensely to the conservation of wildlife and natural ecosystems in a priceless ecological area, could generate new opportunities for law enforcement and security on both sides of the border, and would be a concrete as well as symbolic action to help strengthen the US-Mexico relationship.

An option for raising these issues with Sec. Salazar would be via a short conference call, where I would briefly explain our proposals for further consideration.

I look forward to your kind response.

Sincerely,

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cc:
President Barack Obama