

Proposed Wildlife Legislation

For Range Management

Advisory Committee

By Tom Randolph

Retired Exc. Sec. RMAC

ISSUE PAPER: Proposed legislation for the balanced management of predators on wild lands, rangelands and the rural urban interface in California.

PROBLEM: Populations of the California Black bear, Mtn. lion, coyote and other predators have sky rocked because of environmental factors, sociological factors, and political factors. These populations have put the people of the State at risk, domestic animals at risk, and have significantly led to the decline and lack of migratory deer in the State and California forests. Ranchers have lost millions of dollars of livestock, families have lost beloved pets, and the State loses millions of dollars to property loss in parks and tax revenue generated from the timber and livestock industry. Also, millions of dollars are lost because California hunters go out of State because the hunting experience in California is poor. The regulations are complicated and not management oriented to balance the predator and prey ratio. The management strategies promote large and unbalanced predator populations and single species management. Rangeland is beginning to transition from grass types to brush types because of the loss of historic population of grazing animals not present and increasing the fire problem exponentially. It was once thought that the deer numbers were down because of lack of fire from aggressive fire protection strategies, and the transition from grass to brush and unpalatable brush species was the result. With the number, the size, and intensity of wildfires today there is a substantial increase in palatable browse species yet the population of browsers has not increased proportionately. South Carolina State University did a study in the mid-west and tagged 35 fawns just born to track them for two years. The first year only two fawns were alive. Ninety percent were killed by bears, eight percent from Mt. lion, and the rest

were killed by coyotes or natural mortality. Healthy Range and Wild land needs a balance of predators and prey. California has higher numbers of predators than the mid-west and the problem is larger and more complicated. Lack of water is another aspect of predator management. As animals are focused on small concentrations of water they are more subject to predation. Unregulated Mariaquna gardens are often protected by poachers leaving few browser species and increasing the prey numbers.

SOLUTION: Pass Legislation to allow for the take of any wildlife species that is impeding the balance and carrying capacity of all the wild land in the State (Bears, Mtn. Lions, Coyotes, porcupines. This number should be managed by local biologists and a county committee that have experience in utilizing management strategies in specific counties. (The current county wildlife committees are inadequate and not biologically trained)

PRO: This measure will provide more safety to the general public, less dollar lose to producers and a healthier more diverse environment.

The wildlife populations on wild land would be managed by local people (County Committee- DFW, Land owner, general public, Coop Ext.) familiar with the local populations and not subject to influence outside the area that's not biologically sound.

The intensity of wildfires and the cost of suppression could be lessened substantially.

More revenue could be generated by the state through special hunts in counties and more money could be generated by local business with management hunts.

Watersheds would be better protected with more grazing animals lessening the impact of wildfire intensity and size.

Better diversity of wildlife species leading to a healthier environment

NEGATIVE: Grazing numbers will continue to reduce over time increasing wildfire intensity.

Water capacity will be lessened in reservoirs with fire flood sequence increasing.

Millions of dollars will be spent on larger wildfires

The safety of the general public will be put in peril as more bears and Mt. lions are allowed to increase their populations and their food supply will be found domestically.