

April 5, 2018

Good afternoon members of the Decision Making Committee:

I have good and bad news for you. I'll share the bad news first so that the good news can resonate with the decisions you may make today to protect the public and wildlife.

CBD announced this morning, that "The Trump administration just issued a death sentence to more than 100 threatened species. Trump is erasing America's natural heritage to make his friends richer and allow polluters to ravage our environment. It's disgraceful."

The US Department of the Interior quietly sent a proposed rule to the White House on Monday to rescind the crucial 1975 US Fish & Wildlife rule granting threatened species the same level of protection as endangered species; only if the Service determined that fewer protections were warranted could protections be relaxed.

The rule targets 70 species in CA alone. It includes southern sea otters, northern spotted owls, delta smelt and many others.

In 2016 an extreme right-wing advocacy group called the Pacific Legal Foundation petitioned the Fish & Wildlife Service to rescind the 1975 protective regulation. The petition was authored by Damien Schiff, who was later nominated by President Trump to be a federal judge.

CBD's public announcement stated "This administration's assault on critical safeguards for our air, water and wildlife is not supported by the American public. It threatens to undo decades of progress towards improving the health of the environment for people and wildlife alike. If these critical protections for threatened species are eliminated, Trump will go down in history as the extinction president.

I ask each one of you on this Committee, are you willing to ask questions that can challenge the status quo and make your relationship with county staff uncomfortable? It's a lot more work to do the research and look for the truth rather than take for granted whatever you may hear from your colleagues or even county staff.

Now for the good news! On January 10, 2018, the Ventura County Public Works Agency sent a press release and released a report that concluded that Owls & Hawks are more effective than poisons for rodent control after a 17-month, quantifiable study. In this press release that I am submitting for your review, Ventura County determined that using predatory birds decreased damage to levees by 50% more than when rodenticides were applied. They will not use any more rodenticides in the future. I have referenced Ventura county's cost study several times, showing that trapping of ground squirrels was only 50% more than using rodenticides. Our Ag Dept's ground squirrel abatement program using Diphacinone is ~ \$160K according to a proud proclamation made by our former Ag Commissioner Vince

Guise, at a public IPM Advisory Committee meeting. If his statement is accurate, then it would only cost this county about \$80K to switch to trapping.

Karl Novak of the Ventura County Public Works Agency stated in the press release, "We believe this study is the first to quantify the dramatic impact of attracting raptors and finds a natural, chemical-free way to control burrowing rodents. We think that comprehensive monitoring and continued expansion of the raptor program will result in cost effective and environmentally safe rodent control throughout our watershed."

Even as recently as the January 18th meeting, county staff defended the usage of rodenticides by stating that Ventura county still uses rodenticides. I am glad that our county cannot use Ventura county as a reason to wean off of rodenticides.

I anticipate that county staff will then criticize the usage of predatory perches since our county's pilot trial conducted by the Department of Ag concluded that it was not very effective.

Marin County water district also uses no rodenticides and have determined that predatory perches work well to protect their levees.

I would ask each one of you, regardless of your training in research design, does it make sense to use predatory perches that are made of metal in the hot weather of Contra Costa County? How would you like to perch on a metal post when the summer temperatures can possibly take it to over 130 degrees F and that is only if the surface is silver. If the metal was darker, say black or red, the temperature can get closer to 150 degrees. Also, what type of baselines were established and how was effectiveness of perches, rodenticides, and trapping tracked? Why were metal perches used even when the community expressed concerns with attracting lightning/fires and an uncomfortable surface for landing? Why were the costs of working overtime and driving while learning to trap ground squirrels all included in the cost of trapping? There are 2 county documents that are available for your review and thoughtful discussion in order to answer these type of questions that make the county staff very uncomfortable.

It's a choice you will be making.

One, ignore these documents because they are too long anyway and the weather is getting nice outside, two, review the documents carefully that were used by the county to maintain the status quo in this case for rodenticide usage, or determine that regardless of the past county so called "studies," try the methods that are being used successfully by other agencies even when our county staff find a litany of excuses to ignore safer alternatives working elsewhere.

I thank you for your hard work on this committee.

Susan JunFish,

Parents for a Safer Environment



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Ventura County Public Works Agency Study Shows Owls and Hawks are More Effective than Poisons for Rodent Control

Study is first to quantify the impact of raptors on ground squirrel damage at a levee.

(VENTURA COUNTY, Calif.)— The Ventura County Public Works Agency has demonstrated that hawks and owls are more effective than poisons for controlling rodent damage. At a presentation to the Ventura County Board of Supervisors, VCPWA showed how raptor-friendly habitats reduced ground squirrel burrowing by 50 percent. The study marks the first time any agency has quantified the impact of birds of prey on rodents in public works projects.

In the Ventura County area, there is heightened awareness of the dangers of secondary poisoning from rodenticides when a target rodent is consumed by a higher predator. Deceased bobcats, coyotes, and mountain lions in the area have been found with anticoagulant rodenticide residues in their blood. Accordingly, the Ventura County Board of Supervisors has directed all county agencies to discontinue the use of these rodenticides on County property with the exception of flood control facilities where there was previously no effective alternatives to control rodents. The Raptor Study's results show that installing and maintaining perches, owl boxes and nesting stands could eliminate the need for applying anticoagulant rodenticides at flood control facilities.

As part of the raptor study, VCPWA staff installed 14 raptor perches, one hawk nesting platform, and one owl nesting box along the Revolon Slough in Oxnard, which consists of flood control levees that have been plagued by burrowing rodents. During the 17-month study, the staff recorded 50% less burrow damage to the levee where perches were installed while observing Red-tailed Hawks, and other local hawks and owls using the perches and hunting.

Expansion of the raptor study into a full program is underway and includes installing raptor structures at other flood control facilities, including five owl nest boxes. It is essential for public health and safety that flood control facilities are protected from burrowing rodents. Rodents can cause significant damage and even failure of levees, earth dams and other flood control channels. A ground squirrel tunnel can be 35 feet long, and a single gopher is capable of moving about one ton of earth every year.

"We believe this study is the first to quantify the dramatic impact of attracting raptors and finds a natural, chemical-free way to control burrowing rodents," said Karl Novak, VCPWA Deputy Director of Operations and Maintenance. "We think that comprehensive monitoring and continued expansion of the raptor program will result in cost effective and environmentally safe rodent control throughout our watershed."

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**Poison Free Malibu
THANK YOU!
Ventura County
Watershed Protection District
You're GRRRRREAT!!!!!!**



Thank you for your ground-breaking study demonstrating that raptors are more effective than poisons for controlling rodents and protecting the watershed. This invaluable example will promote wildlife-friendly methods everywhere.

April 17, 2018