

East Bay Regional Parks District
Board Meeting, June 15, 2021
Request to approve revisions to the Free-roaming Cat Management Policy.

San Francisco Bay Area Chapter of The Wildlife Society oral comments

Thank you for allowing time to speak on this important subject today. My name is Patricia Valcarcel and I am representing the San Francisco Bay Area Chapter of The Wildlife Society which is in support of the District's revised Free-roaming Cat Management Policy. The Wildlife Society is an international non-profit scientific and educational association, representing professional wildlife biologists and managers. Our mission is to ensure that wildlife and habitats are conserved through management actions that take into careful consideration relevant scientific information.

Domestic cats are significant predators on small mammals, birds, reptiles, and amphibians, and are responsible for the extinction of numerous mammals, reptiles, and at least 33 bird species globally. Effects of cat predation are most pronounced in isolated or fragmented settings, where populations of wildlife are already low or stressed by other factors. This is representative of the shoreline habitats along the San Francisco Bay which provide habitat for several rare, endangered, and threatened species. Indeed, free-roaming cats have been found to predate on three endangered species in these habitats, California Ridgway's rail, least tern, and western snowy plover. This is in addition to other detrimental effects described in the background information of the Policy, and we thank you for providing this data. The impacts of free-roaming cats make it necessary for the District to manage free roaming cat populations in order to aid in the recovery and conservation of these species along with other native wildlife.

We have reviewed the District's Policy and have found that the focus on education and prevention, coordination with animal control specialists, capture and removal methods, and enforcement of prohibitions on feeding cats or wildlife are aligned with The Wildlife Society's position. In addition, data collection to improve understanding of effectiveness of methods is important for continued improvement of management techniques and we welcome the District's expansion of tracking and reporting on these topics. We appreciate the effort that the District has put into the revised policy and urge the District to ensure that adequate resources are available including staffing levels and funding to effectively implement the Policy. In summary, the San Francisco Bay Area Chapter of The Wildlife Society is in support of the District's revised Free-roaming Cat Management Policy.

Patricia Valcarcel, CWB®
Conservation Affairs Chair
TWS SFBA Chapter