

Good afternoon. My name is Dr. Katie Smith and I am the president-elect of the Western Section of The Wildlife Society which represents about 1000 professional and student members across California, Nevada, and Hawaii. I am also a wildlife biologist who has spent more than a decade researching the conservation and management of endangered animals in the San Francisco Estuary. Of those 100 endangered animals, at least a quarter are subject to predation by feral cats. One that is particularly at risk is the salt marsh harvest mouse, a species for which I am an expert.

In addition to historical habitat loss, this species is now threatened by urbanization, sea level rise and non-native predators like cats. This is especially threatening in isolated marshes that lack connectivity to large source populations (like many East Bay Parks), where new individuals cannot disperse and catastrophic events can lead to local extinction. Any limitation on the ability of the Parks District to take swift action to control cats during periods when salt marsh harvest mice are especially vulnerable, such as during king tides when mice may be crowded at the upland edge, could be locally devastating for the species. And the loss of even

small populations can have severe negative impacts on the genetic health of the species as a whole.

The salt marsh harvest mouse, Ridgway's rail, black rail, and least tern are listed and are covered under state fully protected status which prohibits any action that causes harm to the species. It is known that feral cats in the Estuary kill individuals of these species. Operation of trap, neuter, release activities that result in injury or mortality of these listed species could fall under the prohibitions of the Endangered Species Acts. Any cat that is trapped in native habitats in East Bay Parks should never be released back into the wild. The maintenance of cat colonies is opposed by professional wildlife organizations, such as The Wildlife Society our parent organization, as well as some animal welfare organizations like PETA.

The salt marsh harvest mouse and other native species are local treasures, and we have a moral (and in some cases, legal) obligation to do what we can to protect them. Predator control has made the difference between extinction and persistence for imperiled species in many cases around the world, and The Western Section of The Wildlife Society supports East Bay Parks in their efforts to protect wildlife through feral cat control.