



April 22, 2019

The Honorable Henry Stern, Chair  
 Senate Natural Resources and Water Committee  
 State Capitol, Room 5046  
 Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: SB 474 (Stern): Habitat Conservation Fund—SUPPORT**

Dear Chair Stern,

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, representing more than one million members and supporters in California, we are writing in support of your SB 474, which would extend the Habitat Conservation Fund, a crucial fund that will otherwise sunset in July 2020.

The California Wildlife Protection Act, Proposition 117, was passed by the voters of California in June 1990. The Act states that "... there is an urgent need to protect the rapidly disappearing wildlife habitat that supports California's unique and varied wildlife resources." With California's population expected to reach 50 million by 2050 and the rate at which California's plants and animals are facing a changing climate, the need to protect wildlife habitat is even more urgent today. Unlike traditional bond acts, Proposition 117 did not provide a fixed amount of money for habitat protection on a one-time basis. To assure the conservation of unique and important wildlife habitat, Proposition 117 created the Habitat Conservation Fund (HCF); required an annual transfer of \$30 million into the fund until the year 2020; and specified how the monies were to be expended.

The HCF has protected more than 1 million acres of wildlife habitat since 1990. To better understand HCF accomplishments that were achieved in the last decade alone, the table below summarizes by category the number of acres protected, restored or enhanced.

	Deer and Mountain Lion		T&E Species/Plans		Wetlands Habitat		Aquatic/Riparian Habitat		Corridors, Trails, etc	
	Allocation	Acres	Allocation	Acres	Allocation	Acres	Allocation	Acres	Allocation	Acres
<b>Total Funds/ Acres</b> (7/1/08 to 6/30/18)	\$59,444,987	95,153	\$77,443,556	243,129	\$49,744,615	291,751	\$34,732,015	324,915	\$11,256,318	74,965

In implementing Proposition 117, the Legislature has used a wide variety of funding sources (as specified in the measure) to achieve the \$30 million a year goal. In any year, funds may come from a new bond act, the Environmental License Plate Fund, the Tobacco Tax Fund, the Wildlife Restoration Fund, the Tobacco Tax Public Resources Account, and the Endangered Species Income Tax Checkoff. Only one source of funds is fixed from year to year—each year ten percent of the Unallocated Account of the Tobacco Tax Fund must be used for the wildlife protection programs contained in Proposition 117 (in most years this amounts to approximately \$15 million).

Per Proposition 117's text, HCF monies are allocated to state agencies as follows:

Agency	Annual Allocation
Local Park Districts *	\$2.0 million
State Parks	\$1.0 million
State and Local Parks in Big Sur Area	\$1.5 million
Coastal Conservancy	\$4.0 million
Tahoe Conservancy	\$0.5 million
Wildlife Conservation Board	\$21.0 million

\* Funds are distributed as matching grants by the Department of Parks and Recreation. Eligible agencies include local park, recreation and open space agencies

Proposition 117 requires that half the \$30 million each year be spent in northern California, and half in southern California. Each year, no less than three million dollars must be spent statewide on acquiring and restoring stream and riparian habitat, three million dollars on acquiring and restoring wetlands and special preference is given to land protection projects that create wildlife movement corridors. One-third of the money (\$10 million) must be spent to protect deer and mountain lion populations, with special emphasis on native oak forests. The remaining \$20 million a year must be spent on other types of wildlife habitat for threatened and endangered species or unique habitat types. Funding is also authorized to provide public access, outdoor educational programs and building/restoration of trails in areas owned by local agencies.

The HCF has been a highly effective program for implementing a wide range of vital conservation efforts throughout the entire state. While the HCF annual allocation is relatively small in comparison to resource related bond acts that have passed over the life of the Proposition 117, it has provided a necessary, consistent and reliable revenue source for conservation efforts in California.

Attached is are fact sheets showing total HCF funds spent on eligible conservation projects in Assembly and Senate districts over the past 30 years.

For the reasons discussed above, we strongly support SB 474 and the 30-year extension of this essential fund. We thank you for introducing this important legislation and look forward to working with and supporting this effort. Thank you for the opportunity to provide our perspective on this matter.

Sincerely,

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Defenders of Wildlife

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Executive Director  
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cc: members of the Senate Natural Resources & Water Committee