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January 19, 2015

Douglas Bosco, Chair
State Coastal Conservancy
1330 Broadway, Suite 1300
Oakland, CA 94612

Re: SCC Grant for Liberty Canyon Wildlife Crossing at U.S. 101

Dear Mr. Bosco:

Citizens for Los Angeles Wildlife, Inc. (CLAW) is a non-profit advocacy group whose mission is to promote, educate and protect the fundamental importance of wildlife, wildlife corridors and wildlife habitats everywhere. Within the City of Los Angeles, CLAW is working closely with citizens and City Council as well as the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy to implement an ordinance that would protect existing wildlife habitat linkages (wildlife corridors) in the eastern Santa Monica Mountains and establish a Regional Wildlife Habitat linkage zone in the Los Angeles municipal code (LA City Council File 14-0518.) Our efforts are closely connected to Liberty Canyon, Agoura Hills, the Coast, the Rim of the Valley and beyond.

Reconnecting ancient wildlife connectivity is the case we are facing now at the Liberty Canyon and US-101 in Agoura Hills. Therefore, CLAW joins Caltrans and the National Wildlife Federation to urgently request funding from the State Coastal Conservancy (SCC) for the planning, design, and environmental compliance for Phase 2 of the Liberty Canyon Wildlife Crossing at U.S. 101.

The Santa Monica Mountains to the Sierra Madre Range is one of the few coastal to inland habitat connections remaining in Southern California and we recognize the need to preserve and enhance this critical linkage. The National Park Service (NPS) has been collecting and publishing data on large-carnivore movements for over a decade, validating the importance of the linkage for sustaining wildlife populations in the Santa Monica Mountains. As the research demonstrates, the US-101 acts an impenetrable barrier for wildlife as they attempt to migrate into or out of the Santa Monica Mountains. Animals with large home ranges, such as mountain lions, are essentially trapped within the mountain range, resulting in inbreeding and high mortality rates.

With this grant, the SCC has an opportunity to provide the seed funding for a landmark project that will help reconnect an entire ecosystem, and potentially build what could be the largest wildlife crossing in the world. The project also has the additional benefit of increasing recreational and outdoor opportunities for local residents and the hundreds of thousands of visitors to the Santa Monica Mountain Recreation Area, the largest urban park in the country.

For these reasons, CLAW strongly supports the Liberty Canyon Wildlife Crossing at U.S. 101 project and urges the State Coastal Conservancy Board to support the application from Caltrans and the National Wildlife Federation.

Sincerely,

Alison Simard
Chair, Citizens for Los Angeles Wildlife (CLAW)

cc. Beth Pratt, National Wildlife Federation, prattb@nwf.org