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September 4, 2013

Councilman Paul Koretz  
Fifth Council District  
200 N. Spring Street, Room 440  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Dear Honorable Councilmember Koretz and staff:

Thank you for meeting with Citizens for Los Angeles Wildlife (CLAW) on Wednesday, August 21<sup>st</sup> 2013. It was the general consensus that the city needs to do a better job preserving our habitat connectivity (wildlife corridors) in the eastern area of the Santa Monica Mountains (I-405 to Griffith Park.) We agreed that small hillside conservation easements are not “a taking” and that it is possible to have growth while preserving our environmental heritage. Unfortunately, that is currently not the city’s philosophy because there is a systemic breakdown in the city's review and approval process that threatens our native wildlife species.

So during our meeting, we introduced the idea of a “biological constraints checklist” that ensures that hillside properties are presumed as part of a wildlife corridor until scientifically verified otherwise. We all agreed to the need for a new ordinance that protects this key element of the city's public trust because we are already seeing evidence of adverse changes to this area's biology.

Therefore, this letter is a formal request for you, Councilmember Koretz, to author a wildlife corridor ordinance for the City of Los Angeles’ eastern area Santa Monica Mountains in order to:

- formally label this area as a Regional Wildlife Habitat Linkage Zone -- where just one single-family residential project can cause permanent, system-wide, adverse effects;
- guarantee open space connectivity by requiring all future building permits to permanently accommodate the habitat connectivity;
- create a new system for adequate review and mitigation -- one that includes undisputable guidelines and measurable metrics -- to unequivocally protect this region and other dwindling habitat areas citywide.

We propose this ordinance should include the following:

- A Biological Constraints Checklist -- every new building project needs a simple habitat connectivity and wildlife permeability review. A factual, scientific screening process in a form of a yes or no checklist, for example: “Is the project adjacent to a habitat block?”
- Land protection ratios and minimum guarantees -- on a sliding scale, depending on the size of the parcel, project and the degree of biological impact determined by the checklist. Every impacting parcel must contribute to the wildlife habitat connectivity on a minimum level.
- Easements and deed restrictions in perpetuity -- deed restrictions by the City of LA are the minimum level of protection that should be instituted (with only a unanimous city council vote to undo a wildlife corridor/open space deed restriction recorded in favor of the city.)
- A rule that no grading or building permits are issued until deed restrictions (or easements) are finalized, recorded and approved in writing by the presiding District Councilmember and/or City Attorney’s office.
- Ordinance draft preparation that includes not only council office and planning staff, but also Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, citizen advocates (i.e. CLAW, MDRB, etc.) and at least one independent biologist.

Since our mountain and urban interface is rapidly approaching a tipping point, this ordinance under your leadership could ultimately be the catalyst to protect our native wildlife. Planners, builders, architects, and city staff will have to presume a hillside property is part of an existing or potential wildlife corridor until scientific written analysis indicates it is not AND design urban growth in accordance. We commend you for your leadership on this issue.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signatures of Alison Simard, Skip Haynes, and Tony Tucci.

Alison Simard, Skip Haynes and Tony Tucci  
Board of Directors