

Citizens' Statement of Support for Recovering the Jaguar as a Native Species of the United States



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Early in 2010, the US Fish & Wildlife Service announced that it will prepare a recovery plan for the jaguar. Life Net Nature, an Arizona-based wildlife research and conservation group, supports this decision and calls for a conservation program led by the Service to restore the jaguar to its historic range in the United States. We encourage citizens and organizations to endorse this statement (see details below). It will be submitted to the Service and to the U.S. Secretary of the Interior.

The jaguar has inhabited North America for over 500,000 years. Historically it lived in California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas, with some reports as far north as Colorado and east to the Ohio Valley and the Appalachian Mountains (Daggett and Henning 1974; Mahler 2009). Jaguars were decimated by hunting and by efforts to eliminate wild predators (Brown and Lopez 2001). Recent reports of the great cat have been limited to southern Arizona and New Mexico (USFWS 2010).

We strongly urge the Service to undertake a jaguar recovery program that includes the following essential actions:

1. Protect habitat linkages. As a large, mobile animal, the jaguar needs areas of relatively open country that connect its primary range, such as mountains, canyons, and other remote terrain. These "habitat linkages" are threatened by land development, urban sprawl, highways without wildlife crossings, and other factors that radically change the natural character of the land. The Service should begin a comprehensive effort with counties, highway departments, public land managers, private landowners, conservation organizations, and other stakeholders to ensure that "travel corridors" for the jaguar are protected.

2. Conserve wild lands. The United States has large blocks of wildlife habitat that can offer the jaguar adequate food, water, areas for seclusion and security, and sites for breeding and rearing of offspring. These areas typically encompass our national forests and other public lands. Many of these lands are threatened by mining, road construction, energy development, overgrazing, and other factors. The Service should lead a concerted effort to protect the integrity of "core habitat areas" for the jaguar. Wild land areas as well as habitat linkages needed for jaguar recovery in the U.S. should receive special conservation attention by the Service as "critical habitat."

3. Ensure that jaguars can roam freely between the US and Mexico. The construction of fencing and related activities along the international border with Mexico has resulted in a barrier to jaguar movement between the two countries. The Service and the U.S. Department of the Interior should engage