



**The Wildlife Society  
Western Section  
Michael Morrison, President  
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February 1, 2000

Mr. Robert Treanor  
Executive Director  
State of California Fish and Game Commission  
1416 9th St., Room 1320  
Sacramento, CA 95814

sent via surface mail and FAX: 916-653-5040

Re: Ferret Ownership

Dear Commissioners,

The Wildlife Society is an international, nonprofit scientific and educational organization serving professionals in all areas of wildlife conservation and resource management. For over 60 years our membership of dedicated men and women has sought to enhance the capability of wildlife professionals in conserving diversity, sustaining productivity, and ensuring responsible use of wildlife resources for the benefit of society. This letter was prepared by the Conservation Affairs Committee of The Wildlife Society - Western Section, then reviewed by members of the Western Section's Executive Board.

It has come to our attention that you will discuss a request by Californians to legalize ferret importation and ownership in California (Discussion Item number 9 scheduled for your meeting of February 3rd, 2000). We object to the legalization of ownership, importation, and intra-state transport of ferrets in California. We support the previous positions taken by the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) and the California Fish and Game Commission. Keeping the ferret away from California's wildlife will better enable CDFG to "manage California's diverse fish, wildlife, and plant resources and the habitats upon which they depend for their ecological value and for their use and enjoyment by the public," according to CDFG's mission.

The California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) considers the European Ferret to be one of the most unwanted exotic species in California. The CDFA funded a comprehensive study of potentially invasive exotic bird and mammal species, which ranked the European ferret (*Mustela putoria*) as having moderate potential to establish wild populations in California (Smallwood and Salmon 1992). This study ranked the ferret as highly likely to cause damage, and highly likely to survive government-funded, organized eradication efforts. Of all species of exotic birds and mammals that were considered to be an invasive threat by the CDFA, the European ferret ranked as the 12th greatest threat, but it

ranked 3rd among species that do not already occur in the wild in California.

The ferret's establishment in the wild would likely cause serious damage to California's wildlife, including to numerous endangered species. It could also pose a threat to small livestock operations. The legalization of ferrets in California would impede the California Department of Fish and Game's mission, and it would put the CDFG's policy at odds with that of the CDFA.

Again, we urge the Fish and Game Commission to maintain its previous position on ferrets, and to not legalize the ownership, importation, and intra-state transportation of ferrets in California. We would be happy to provide other references that would support our position.

Thank your for your consideration,

Michael Morrison, President  
The Wildlife Society - Western Section

Reference: Smallwood, K. S. and T. P. Salmon. 1992. A rating system for potential exotic vertebrate pests. *Biological Conservation* 62:149-159.

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