



May 8, 2019

The Honorable Anthony J. Portantino, Chair
 Senate Appropriations Committee
 State Capitol, Room 2206
 Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: SB 395 (Archuleta): “Wildlife Traffic Safety Act” – SUPPORT

Dear Senator Portantino,

The undersigned wildlife conservation organizations urge your strong support for SB 395 (Archuleta) – legislation which would improve public safety and help protect our wildlife by reducing the frequency of vehicle-wildlife collisions, while also allowing the recovery and use of healthy, edible wild meat currently wasted on California’s roadsides each year.

Statistics show that one out of every 16 vehicular accidents in California involve wildlife. In addition to the vehicle damage, injury and even death suffered by motorists, hundreds of thousands of small and large animals are killed on our roadways each year. According to researchers at the Road Ecology Center at the University of California at Davis, about 25,000 drivers per year in California collide with deer alone. Worse yet, according to data gathered by the California Highway Patrol (CHP) over the last six years, collisions with large game animals have resulted in over 1,500 injuries and at least 24 fatalities statewide. Yet, regardless of these staggering statistics, California has taken no action towards developing a programmatic response to mitigate these avoidable threats to the safety of our public and wildlife.

SB 395 would take a much-needed step towards addressing these risks in several ways. To begin, SB 395 would require the Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) to establish a user-friendly web portal or smartphone app – similar to those already in use in other western states – which would allow motorists to report the location, animal type, date, time and characteristics of vehicle-wildlife collisions. Armed with this critically needed data, Caltrans, DFW, CHP and other state agencies can better predict road-kill hotspots, measure contributing factors, and evaluate the placement of wildlife road crossings and other remedial actions to greatly reduce future vehicle-wildlife collisions.

To encourage data reporting, SB 395 would also authorize motorists to recover and salvage for human consumption edible portions of deer, elk, antelope and wild pig killed by a vehicle – provided they obtain a permit within 24 hours and provide the above referenced information to DFW. Motorists who do not choose to salvage animals would also be encouraged to report them to facilitate their removal and help populate the database.

Of equal importance, this much-needed program can be implemented in California at minimal cost to the state. Similar programs have already been developed and are underway in most western states, including Idaho. According to representatives with the Idaho Department of Fish and Game, their cost of implementation was negligible due to the app already being developed and requiring only minor modification, and their salvage permit being self-reporting and not requiring any dedicated resources. It is also worth noting that Idaho has had more than 10,000 animals salvaged since their program began in 2012.

SB 395 would significantly improve our public safety and help protect our wildlife by generating the data necessary to reduce the frequency of future vehicle-wildlife collisions – all at a nominal cost to the state. SB 395 would also help put an end to the needless waste of large animals killed on our roadways by allowing the salvage of wild game meat for those in need, or those who simply choose to enjoy a healthy, free-range and organic food source.

For all these reasons, we respectfully urge your strong support of SB 395 when the bill comes before your Senate Appropriations Committee in the near future.

Sincerely,

Kyle Weaver, President and CEO
Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation

Mark Hennelly, V.P. of Government Affairs
California Waterfowl Association

Donn Walgamuth, President
California Deer Association

Darryl Williams, President
California Chapter – Wild Sheep Foundation

Lori Jacobs, President
California Houndsmen for Conservation

Gary F. Brennan, President
San Diego County Wildlife Federation

Fred Harpster, President
The Black Brant Group

Dennis Slater, President
Tulare Basin Wetlands Association

Adam Chavez, President
California Hawking Club

Aoibheann Cline, Western States Coordinator
Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation

Don Kirby, President
Cal-Ore Wetland and Waterfowl Council

Chriss Bowles, President
California Bowmen Hunters/State Archery Association

Cathie Nelson, President
San Francisco Bay Area Chapter - Safari Club International

cc: Members, Senate Appropriations Committee
The Honorable Senator Bob Archuleta