

KANSAS WILDLIFE FEDERATION

CALL FOR PROTECTION OF PUBLIC LANDS AND WILDLIFE FROM FERAL CATS

Whereas, in the past year, a series of new scientific studies have been published documenting extensive wildlife mortality resulting from cat predation, growing risk to human health from rabies and toxoplasmosis spread by cats, and the ineffectiveness of trap, neuter, release (TNR) programs at stemming cat populations; and

Whereas, this issue was raised with the Department of the Interior in an April 12, 2011, letter to Secretary Ken Salazar. To date, no meaningful actions needed to address this problem have been taken by the Department; and

Whereas, as the Smithsonian Institution and FWS have found, there is great urgency due to the high mortality wildlife populations face. A peer-reviewed study by scientists from these two organizations estimated that approximately 2.4 billion birds and 12.3 billion mammals are killed in the United States by cats every year; and

Whereas, while both owned and un-owned cats contribute, un-owned (e.g., feral) cats are responsible for over two-thirds of these bird deaths and nearly 90 percent of mammal deaths; and

Whereas, cats are now the number one source of direct anthropogenic mortality for birds and mammals, and their impact on wildlife will only increase as the numbers of cats – which have tripled in the last 40 years – continue to rise; and

Whereas, most recently, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has determined that feral cat colonies pose a threat to human health. According to the CDC, cats are consistently the number one carrier of rabies among domestic animals and disproportionately pose a risk of human exposure to rabies because of the increased likelihood of human-cat interactions; and

Whereas, a recently published study led by CDC scientists stated, “The propensity to underestimate rabies risk from cats has led to multiple large-scale rabies exposures.” Continued tolerance for roaming feral cats is, according to the Florida Department of Health, “not tenable on public health grounds because of the persistent threat posed to communities; and

Whereas, toxoplasmosis also threatens the health and welfare of people and wildlife. This disease is caused by a parasitic protozoan that depends on cats to complete its life cycle. Up to 74 percent of all cats will host the toxoplasmosis-causing parasite in their lifetime and shed hundreds of millions of infectious eggs as a result. Any contact, either directly or indirectly, with cat feces risks human and wildlife health; and

Whereas, in humans the parasite often encysts within the brain, which may cause behavioral changes and has been linked to schizophrenia, Alzheimer’s, and other neuro-inflammatory diseases. Pregnant women may suffer sudden abortion or fetal developmental defects (e.g., blindness). Wildlife are similarly at risk, and contamination of watersheds with infected cat feces has been linked to the deaths of a number of freshwater and marine species (e.g., otters, Hawaiian monk seals); and

Whereas, TNR programs fail to reduce cat populations and cannot be relied upon as a management tool to remove cat colonies or protect people and wildlife. Multiple peer-reviewed studies, including the CDC's, have found that TNR programs do not adequately reduce feral cat populations or effectively mitigate health concerns. TNR colonies may actually lead to increased numbers of cats. One long-term study of TNR in Rome, Italy, went so far as to call TNR a "waste of money, time, and energy."

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Kansas Wildlife Federation assembled during its annual meeting, February 22, 2014 in Salina, Kansas, affirms the only sure way to simultaneously protect wildlife and people is to remove feral cats from the landscape; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that cat colonies are a common problem on many federal lands managed by the Department of the Interior and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. KWF urges that each agency develop a clear policy for the removal of cat colonies on the federal lands they are responsible for stewarding.