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April 7, 2014

Humboldt County Board of Supervisors
3015 H Street
Eureka, CA 95501

OPPOSE CALIFORNIA ASSEMBLY BILL 2205—Maintain the integrity of sport hunting.

Dear Board of Supervisors,

Assembly Bill 2205 is a bill that would repeal California's ban on hunting bears, bobcats and other wildlife with hounds. This bill is not about providing counties with local control over hunting, it is about undermining the democratic process by a small group of special interests. A handful of frustrated hunters want to use their dogs again and have introduced Assembly Bill 2205 to undercut the ban recently signed into law (SB 1221). Sponsoring this bill is Minutemen and Tea Party darling, Tim Donnelly.

The practice of hounding is not necessary. Hunters profess adherence to rules of fair chase, which require that animals have a reasonable chance to escape. It is seen by the majority of hunters as being “unsporting” and “canned” because any hunter, skilled or otherwise is virtually guaranteed that they will get their trophy bear. Approximately half of the legal bear kill and 80% of the bobcat take is achieved by hunters who do not use hounds.

A 2011 survey conducted by Mason-Dixon Polling & Research, Inc. found that 83 percent of California voters opposed hounding of bears.

With the passage of Senate Bill 1221, California joined 14 other states—including Colorado, Oregon, Washington, and Montana—that allow bear hunting but prohibit the use of hounds. Oregon voted against the practice in 1994, while Montana banned hounding almost a century ago.

Hounding involves fitting dogs with radio devices that allow bear and bobcat houndsmen to monitor the dogs' movement remotely. Dogs are released to chase frightened wild animals often for miles, across all types of habitat, including forests and private property. Dogs pursue their target until exhaustion and drive the bear or bobcat up a tree to escape or turns to confront the dog pack. Hound hunters arrive at his leisure, take aim and shoot the exhausted animal out of a tree, and use packs of up to 20 hounds.

Environmental Protection Information Center

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Since the pursuit of bears and bobcats by hounds depends on releasing them to run across large tracts of land, hounds also pursue non-target species, including deer and ground-nesting birds, and animals who are endangered or protected. The nature of hounding also causes significant conflicts between hound hunters and landowners, other types of hunters, and other outdoor recreationists.

The Department of Fish and Wildlife estimates that as many black bears are taken illegally as legally each year owing to the lucrative black market for bear parts like gallbladders, paws and claws.

And the population may be in more trouble than some might think. The black bear harvests in 2010 and 2011 were unusually low, raising questions about the size and health of California's bear population. Bears hunted in 2010 totaled 1,503 animals and in 2011 were 1,264 – both the two lowest harvests in the past 18 years. This decline should be a cause for concern about the population, which may be declining in California.

EPIC urges the Humboldt County Board of Supervisors to uphold the California's Ban on Hound Hunting, do not support Assembly Bill 2205.

Sincerely,

Natalynne DeLapp