



*Excellence in Wildlife Stewardship Through Science and Education*

The Wildlife Society – New Mexico Chapter  
Wildlife-Border Issues Workshop  
July 28, 2008

## **Resolution on the US-Mexico Border Fence Impacts to Wildlife**

WHEREAS, The Wildlife Society- New Mexico Chapter is an organization of 200 biologists, resource managers and other professionals in New Mexico concerned about the regional issues affecting indigenous plants and animals in the American Southwest and who strongly support their conservation based on sound and accurate scientific knowledge; and,

WHEREAS, we are concerned by potential negative environmental impacts of the Secure Fence Act of 2006 which mandates the US Department of Homeland Security construct 3 - 4 m high steel fences, and impenetrable (to some wildlife) vehicle barriers along large sections of the US-Mexico border, stretching from near San Diego, California, to Brownsville, Texas, totaling over 1,280 km; and,

WHEREAS, Section 102(c) of the Real ID Act of 2005 exempts the Department of Homeland Security from all federal, state, and local environmental laws including the Endangered Species Act and National Environmental Policy Act in regards to constructing fences, roads, and other barriers along US borders; and,

WHEREAS, fence construction has progressed without substantive consideration, study, analysis, or subsequent mitigation for environmental effects; and,

WHEREAS, plans to complete the fence before 2009 have been expedited (Segee and Neeley 2006); and,

WHEREAS, the US-Mexico borderlands is a region of high biological diversity, including many rare, threatened, and endangered species; and,

WHEREAS, major regions along the US-Mexico border are comprised of federal protected lands that provide essential habitat for wildlife, including Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge, Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument, Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge, Coronado National Forest, San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area, San Bernardino National Wildlife Refuge, Big Bend National Park, Rio Grande Wild and Scenic River, Lower Rio Grande Valley National Wildlife Refuge, and Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge in the United

States, and the El Pinacate Biosphere, Santa Elena Canyon Flora and Fauna Protection Area, and Maderas del Carmen Flora and Fauna Protection Area in Mexico; and,

WHEREAS, construction of the fence may directly destroy rare and endangered plants, and their habitat (Cohn 2007) if sensitive areas are not surveyed and avoided; and,

WHEREAS, the US-Mexico boundary is an arbitrary division in relation to the natural world; and,

WHEREAS, wildlife species in the arid southwest are dependent upon ephemeral water sources and more importantly permanent water to persist in such a harsh climate, and permanent separation from these sources by an impenetrable barrier may result in the extermination of local populations; and,

WHEREAS, the fence may prohibit movement and dispersal for larger species of terrestrial wildlife, particularly federally endangered mammals such as the jaguar, ocelot, jaguarundi, and Sonoran pronghorn; and,

WHEREAS, many terrestrial species in the borderlands region exist as metapopulations linked by dispersal, which depend on movements across the international border for persistence (e.g., Hellgren et al. 2005, McCain and Childs 2008); and,

WHEREAS, for some species, such as the endangered jaguar, scientific data (McCain and Childs 2008) indicate a dependence on large expanses of habitat and cross-border movement, and that disruption of habitat and movement by the fence will put populations of jaguars in the United States at great risk; and,

WHEREAS, fence construction may irreparably harm many species and some of the Southwest's most significant lands;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the New Mexico Chapter of the Wildlife Society, convening in a special workshop on July 8, 2008 in Las Cruces, NM, calls upon the Governors of all the border states (those of the U.S. and of Mexico), the U.S. Secretary of the Interior, the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture, the Dirección General de Flora y Fauna Silvestres y Áreas Naturales Protegidas de México, the Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Secretary for Homeland Security to consider and mitigate potential negative impacts of the border fence, vehicle barriers, and virtual fence projects to wildlife and allow for study and the recommendations of viable alternatives to an impenetrable barrier. We further recommend that Congress repeal section 102(c) of the Real ID Act of 2005, and enact the Borderlands Conservation and Security Act (HR 2593) that will require the Department of Homeland Security to determine the effect that a border fence will have on wildlife and to explore alternatives to fence construction, to require compliance with environmental laws, and fund initiatives that help evaluate and reduce damage to borderland wildlife and resources.

## References

- Borderlands Conservation and Security Act. 2007. House of Representative bill 2593. June, 6 2007. [http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/t2GPO/http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=110\\_cong\\_bills&docid=f:h2593ih.txt.pdf](http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/t2GPO/http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=110_cong_bills&docid=f:h2593ih.txt.pdf). Accessed 6 March 2008.
- Cohn, J.P. 2007. The environmental impacts of a border fence. *BioScience*, 57:96.
- Hellgren, E.C., D. P. Onorato, and J. R. Skiles. 2005. Dynamics of a black bear population within a desert metapopulation. *Biological Conservation*, 122:131-140.
- McCain, E.B., and J.L. Childs. 2008. Evidence of resident jaguars (*Panthera onca*) in the southwestern United States and the implications for conservation. *Journal of Mammalogy*, 89:1-10.
- Real ID Act. 2005. Public Law 109-13. May 11, 2005, Real ID Act, 8 U.S.C. 1101. [http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/toGPObss/http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=109\\_cong\\_public\\_laws&docid=f:publ013.109.pdf](http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/toGPObss/http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=109_cong_public_laws&docid=f:publ013.109.pdf). Accessed 6 March 2008.
- Secure Fence Act. 2006. Public Law 109-367. October 26, 2006, Secure Fence Act, 8 U.S.C. 1103. [http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/toGPObss/http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=109\\_cong\\_public\\_laws&docid=f:publ367.109.pdf](http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/toGPObss/http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=109_cong_public_laws&docid=f:publ367.109.pdf). Accessed 6 March 2008.
- Segee, B.P., and J.L. Neely. 2006. On the line: the impacts of immigration policy on wildlife and habitat in the Arizona borderlands. *Defenders of Wildlife*, Washington, D.C.