

February 23, 2021

East Bay Regional Parks District (EDRPD)
Natural and Cultural Resources Committee

Subject: Support of Local Animal Shelters for Draft “Free-Roaming Cat Management Policy”

Dear Committee Members,

As the leaders of the animal shelters in Oakland, Berkeley, Alameda, Fremont, Hayward and Contra Costa County, we are writing in support of the draft “Free-Roaming Cat Management Policy” in East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD) parks pending the addition of the following language in “Section 4. Free-Roaming Cats: Capture and Removal Methods” to ensure additional safeguards for the humane treatment of all animals and full accountability to the public:

“If field euthanasia becomes necessary, then all euthanasia methods must be in compliance with the current American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) Guidelines. Any cats euthanized in the field must be transported to the local municipal or county animal shelter to ensure AVMA compliance and provide local shelters the opportunity to scan for microchips.”

While we unequivocally support the work of EBRPD to protect endangered bird species and other wildlife, when we learned of the shooting of cats at the Martin Luther King Regional Shoreline (shoreline), in Oakland, we were extremely disheartened because we understood that an alternative to lethal removal could be achieved through humane trapping and safe relocation of the cats. We not only have the means to help in such situations, but as the representatives of the animal services organizations with EBRPD parks in our jurisdiction, it is our obligation to do so.

When we reached out to EBRPD staff to offer support for cats or other animals in EBRPD parks following the tragic deaths of the cats at Shoreline we were gratified our outreach was met with an immediate and robust willingness to work in partnership toward a shared goal for protecting wildlife while also respecting the rights of cats. The meetings we have had with EBRPD have built a foundation for a strong and lasting partnership, through which we have a shared obligation to ensure the spirit of this policy, that no cat be lethally removed from EBRPD parks, is achieved and sustained in perpetuity.

Specifically, we support the draft “Free-Roaming Cat Management Policy” for the following reasons:

- The Policy outlines the terms for a meaningful, strategic, and ongoing partnership between EBRPD and the animal shelters we represent, to be memorialized in an operating agreement, providing our shelters the authority and access to intervene on behalf of cats when their removal is deemed necessary. This is consistent with your Values Statement which states the EBRPD shall “Participate in partnerships with public agencies, nonprofit organizations, volunteers and the private sector to achieve mutual goals.”
- EBRPD asserts the right to conduct lethal removal only when cats are in a habitat of federally- or state-threatened species, areas identified through this policy and representing a small fraction of the EBRPD lands, only when clearly defined species are at risk to predation, and only as a last resort when all reasonable efforts to remove cats have failed.
- EBRPD proposes to enact multiple safeguards to make lethal removal unnecessary, including requiring that EBRPD request intervention by the appropriate animal shelter, provide the necessary time for shelters to coordinate with cat caretakers, if any, and the shelters’ cat rescue partners to undertake efforts to humanely trap and remove the cats. Additionally, EBRPD commits to management review of EBRPD staff determinations should efforts to safely trap and remove cats have failed.
- EBRPD recognizes that cats in their parks could be lost cats who may have caretakers searching for them. They also recognize that the removal of cats from the areas of concern are complicated, given the prevalence of marshlands and other natural obstacles to the trapping of cats, and recommends an exploration through our partnership of necessary tools, training, and identification of potential third-party entities that can assist when traditional trapping efforts fail.
- The policy addresses the core issue of animal abandonment that leads to the need for removal of cats from EBRPD parks by committing resources for enhanced signage, outreach, and community education.
- EBRPD is committing to full transparency regarding removal efforts, making EBRPD and us, its shelter partners, publicly accountable for any actions taken.
- From the beginning of our discussions, we have seen that EBRPD staff have acted in good faith and are fully committed to finding a solution to this complicated issue of cats living in habitats of threatened species.

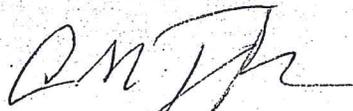
By supporting this policy, we are additionally making a commitment to our own communities, to work in close collaboration with cat rescue organizations and other interested parties to ensure the cats removed from EBRPD are safely relocated or adopted, depending on the best

interest of the individual cats. Further, we are fully committing the support of our shelters to ensure the need for lethal removal of cats from EBRPD parks is eliminated.

Sincerely,



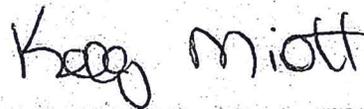
Ann Dunn, Director
Oakland Animal Services



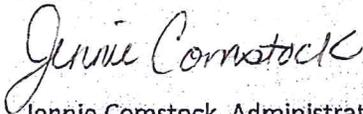
Amelia Funghi, Manager
Berkeley Animal Care Services



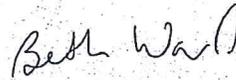
John L. Lipp, CEO
Friends of the Alameda Animal Shelter



Kelly Miott, Animal Services Manager
Tri-City Animal Shelter



Jennie Comstock, Administrator
Hayward Animal Services Bureau



Beth Ward, Director
Contra Costa County Animal Services