

MEMORANDUM

To: Board of Directors
East Bay Regional Parks District

From: 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, Manager
Tri-City Animal Shelter

Jennie Comstock, Administrator
Hayward Animal Services

Beth Ward, Director,
Contra Costa Animal Services

Jennifer Wills, Supervisor
Alameda County Animal Services

George Harding, Manager
Antioch Animal Services

Date: June 14, 2021

Re: Cat Management Policy

As the leaders of the animals shelters listed above, representing every city and county animal shelter within the jurisdiction of the East Bay Regional Parks District (EBRPD), we offer our support for the Cat Management Policy and our full commitment to uphold the responsibilities of our agencies to ensure the safe removal of cats found in habitats of endangered bird and mice species in sensitive wildlife areas in EBRPD parks. We provide this support because we believe this partnership with EBRPD will make it unnecessary to lethally remove cats in the future.

On February 23, 2021, we provided a letter of support for the then EBRPD draft Cat Management Policy, considered by the Natural and Cultural Resources Committee, contingent upon the addition of language that ensures that any lethal removal by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) complies with American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) guidelines and provides for a method to fulfill our obligation to ensure AVMA compliance and scan for microchips.

With this outstanding concern having been addressed in the revised policy under consideration for adoption on June 15, 2021, we support this policy for the following reasons noted in our February 23 letter:

- 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. If field euthanasia becomes necessary, then all euthanasia methods will be approved by the current American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) Guidelines.
- 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 may be lost cats who may have owners 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.

We look forward to continuing to strengthen the partnership between this shelter coalition and EBRPD and reiterate our commitment to the work ahead to ensure that the spirit of this agreement, that no cat be lethally removed from EBRPD parks, becomes institutionalized within each of our organizations and is sustainable well beyond the involvement of the parties in this partnership.