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July 11, 2022

Dear Commissioners:

We, the Aldo’s Silver City Great Old Broads for Wilderness, are writing in support of this Commission’s recent 2-1 decision NOT to renew the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s [Wildlife Services](https://www.biologicaldiversity.org/campaigns/wildlife_services/index.html) contract because the federal agency, which kills carnivores on behalf of the livestock industry, failed to fulfill requirements within its last contract.

When this contract came up for renewal in 2020, and again in 2021, we joined with many others to oppose that action. When the parties eventually negotiated a compromise contract, we continued our engagement to ensure that its terms were followed. We wanted this to be successful in a manner that would provide protections to wildlife, livestock, and pets, and thus would use non-lethal methods and report thereon.

Unfortunately, the terms have not been met. Contract law requires a meeting of minds, a fair exchange of promises and responsibilities, and penalties in the event of non-compliance. A key term in these contracts was that the agency would prioritize non-lethal methods of livestock protection. Understood was that the quarterly reports would document what those methods were and how they were applied in fact. However, neither the most recently released report nor those from earlier quarters contain any such report about non-lethal methods. Given the importance to our local economy of eco-tourism, to our residents’ health and happiness in outdoor recreation, and the attraction of our wild resources to our community and visitors, this failure allows a further bias in favor of a single industry (livestock) and to protect one group (ranchers) against others who incorporate our resources into their families’ welfare.

Our local wildlife is already stressed with the effects of climate change, encroaching development into wildlife habitat, and the damage caused by free ranging livestock on the federal lands purported to be held in trust for us all. The frailty of the interconnections of the natural world and human presence must be respected and protected. You Commissioners recognized this, and supported transparency in the contract’s terms.

The terms have not been fulfilled nor reported on. Yet, the livestock industry and Wildlife Services are expected to seek a re-vote before the full County Commission. We believe a re-vote must not occur, or succeed, if there is no intention to hold accountable the parties for a failure of a key term of this contract, one which all parties knew was critical to the agreement. As the party in question has not provided any clear and acceptable information on non-lethal methods of control, the terms of the contract have not been met and the contract is properly terminated/not renewed.

We urge the full Commission to not grant the re-vote, or renewal, of this contract.

Sincerely,

Denise Smith, interim co-leader

Joanie Connors, co-leader

Marcia Stout, co-leader