

Resolution against the U.S.-Mexico Border Wall
Approved Electronically by the Membership of the Southwestern
Association of Naturalists (SWAN)

On 13 July 2017

WHEREAS, The Southwestern Association of Naturalists (SWAN) is an international association of scientists, educators, and students founded in 1953 to promote the field study of plants and animals in the southwestern United States, Mexico, and Central America and we are concerned about the future of indigenous plants and animals in that region and we strongly support their conservation based on sound and accurate scientific knowledge; and,

WHEREAS, we were initially disturbed by potential negative environmental impacts of the Secure Fence Act of 2006, which mandated the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to construct 3-4 m high steel fences along large sections of the U.S.-Mexico border; and,

WHEREAS, 1,078 km of these fences have already been erected; and,

WHEREAS, we are now further disturbed and even more strongly alarmed by Executive Order 13767, signed by President Donald Trump on 25 January 2017, directing construction of an even taller (up to 16 m), more massive, and continuous wall along the entire U.S.-Mexico border, stretching from near San Diego, California, to Brownsville, Texas, totaling 3,145 km; and,

WHEREAS, even though construction of this new wall has not yet begun and President Trump has temporarily delayed action on the wall, he has promised to place the cost for its construction in the federal budget for work to begin in the fall of 2017 and by some way or another expect Mexico subsequently to reimburse the U.S. for its cost; 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 when constructing fences, walls, roads, and other barriers along U.S. borders, including the Endangered Species Act and National Environmental Policy Act; and,

WHEREAS, initial fence construction progressed without substantive consideration or mitigation for environmental effects and it is unclear if the same lack of consideration or mitigation will continue once construction of the taller, more massive border wall begins; and,

WHEREAS, major regions along the U.S.-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 wall will directly destroy rare and endangered plants (Cohn 2007); and,

WHEREAS, the U.S.-Mexico boundary is an arbitrary division in relation to the natural world (Segee and Neeley 2006); and,

WHEREAS, the U.S.-Mexico borderlands is a region of high biological diversity (Segee and Neeley 2006, Lasky et al. 2011), including many rare, threatened, and endangered species, and the wall will prohibit movement and dispersal for larger species of terrestrial wildlife, particularly federally endangered mammals such as the jaguar, ocelot, jaguarondi, and Sonoran pronghorn and especially those that 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 for some species, such as the endangered jaguar, scientific conclusions indicate a dependence on large expanses of habitat and cross-border movement (McCain and Childs 2008), and that disruption of habitat and movement by the wall will put populations of jaguars in the United States at great risk; but it is not just large mammals that are put at risk by the construction of the wall, 49 smaller species with limited geographic ranges and living near the present border fence or proposed wall are considered at global conservation risk and include 14 amphibians, 21 reptiles, and 14 mammals (Lasky et al. 2011); and,

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

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Southwestern Association of Naturalists (SWAN) 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 Secretaria de Medio Ambiente y Recursos Naturales (SEMARNAT) of Mexico, the Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Secretary for Homeland Security to immediately stop all plans for construction of the proposed border wall based on the potential negative impacts of the wall to native plants and wildlife and to mitigate the current negative impacts of the existing fence. We further recommend that the U.S. Congress repeal section 102(c) of the Real ID Act of

2005, and revive and pass into law the Borderlands Conservation and Security Act of 2007 (HR 2593) that will require the Department of Homeland Security to determine the effect that a border wall will have on plants and wildlife and to explore alternatives to wall construction, to require compliance with environmental laws, and fund initiatives that help reduce damage to borderland plants, wildlife, and resources.

References

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**Approved and signed by the President of The Southwestern
Association of Naturalists (SWAN)**

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Susana Perea-Fox". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'S' and a distinct 'F' at the end.

Dr. Susana Perea

President of SWAN