

August 10, 2015

To: Sparks City Council and the Mayor

Re: Feral Cat Colonies

Dear Mayor Martini and Sparks City Council members :

I am a board member of both the Coalition for Nevada's Wildlife and the Nevada Chapter of Backcountry Hunters and Anglers – both are organizations which care fervently about the health, welfare and habitat of our native wildlife.

Thank you for an opportunity to comment on the proposed city-wide zoning ordinance to ban feral cat colonies within the city of Sparks. I recognize that the program to trap/neuter/re-release feral cats to colonies with volunteer “caretakers” is a program used in a number of areas around the USA. In my opinion it is a well-intentioned, but ultimately inhumane non-solution to the exponentially growing problem of feral cat colonies, particularly in our urban areas. Rather, **I urge you to authorize feral cats to be trapped and, those that cannot be adopted, be humanely euthanized. Additionally, it should be illegal to feed feral cats which serves only to exacerbate the problem.** If animal groups care to fund the creation of sanctuaries, where these cats can be housed in a completely contained situation for the rest of their lives, this is the solution for those who cannot sanction humane euthanization. In addition, an education program directed at cat owners is needed.

My reasons are as follows:

- Feral cats – whether spayed/neutered/inoculated or not -- daily decimate large numbers of our wild birds (including beloved songbirds), amphibians, reptiles, bats.
- No trapping program can possibly trap all the cats. Some will remain to rapidly reproduce, as well as potentially carry diseases harmful to both other cats and humans = a safety issue.
- For the above reason, this expensive program would have to continue into the unforeseen future, while, rather than solving a problem, would create a cascade of unintended problems.
- Legalizing feral cat colonies on public property makes them ultimately the perpetual responsibility of local government, who are we the taxpayer citizens.
- Local Reno/Sparks bat colonies have been determined to have a few individuals who carry rabies. One of the largest colonies is under a bridge over East McCarran Blvd. Many of the cat colonies are along the river. Cats do kill bats. Thus, it is only a matter of time before rabies becomes a serious and growing problem to cats and humans both.
- Animals, living in high density of their own kind, potentially develop aberrant, frequently aggressive, behavior. There are numerous anecdotes of feral cats becoming aggressive. This is yet another safety issue for other cats and humans, especially children.
- In Washoe County at present, these colonies exist primarily along the river, a place where wild birds are abundant and families come to relax and recreate. Thus, a focus of particularly high concern for both the safety issue and the wild bird decimation issue.
- Feral cat colonies can be a food source to draw coyotes into urban areas, creating yet another problem between domestic and wild animals, plus doubling the human safety issue.
- No animal dies a peaceful death in the wild, or urban “jungles”. Feral cats, if rereleased, will be ultimately condemned to a death far less humane than our domestic cats who are typically humanely euthanized when their quality of life has disappeared due to disease, age or both.
- Why would we condone subjecting cats, beloved domestic pets, to such a fate when we would never condone anyone irresponsibly turning an unwanted dog, horse, exotic reptile/bird/fish,

etc. into the “wilds” to survive (and die) on it's own?

- Taxpayers should not be responsible to pay for the irresponsible decisions of cat owners who either do not spay/neuter their animals and end up with unwanted kittens, or worse, just turn cats loose when they cannot care for them.

Positive solutions to this problem:

- Support humane groups trapping feral cats and those that cannot be adopted be humanely euthanized.
- Support humane groups creating fully enclosed sanctuaries on private property.
- Encourage humane groups to have sufficient spay/neuter clinics, in areas of highest need, at a reduced rate or free.
- Support a vigorous education program directed toward the causal factor: irresponsible owners:
 - a) the responsibility to spay/neuter their cats
 - b) the negative impacts of letting their cat roam -- or worse: dumping unwanted cats/kittens
 - c) the importance of keeping cats inside or in a contained outside area and bringing them in at night, the time of highest wildlife depredation.

Thank you for consideration of my comments and concerns,

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