AMERICAN BIRD CONSERVANCY

Shaping the future for birds

October 26, 2011

Dear Mayor,

On behalf of American Bird Conservancy (ABC), I respectfully call your attention to the threat posed to birds and other wildlife in your city by feral and free-roaming cats. Given the well-documented impacts of cat predation on wildlife, ABC urges you to oppose Trap-Neuter-Re-abandon (TNR) programs and the outdoor feeding of cats as a feral cat management option.

Cat overpopulation is a human-caused tragedy that affects the health and well-being of cats, our native wildlife and the public. Numerous, published, scientific studies have shown that outdoor cats, even well-fed ones, kill hundreds of millions of wild birds and other animals each year in the U.S., including endangered species. Birds that nest or feed on the ground are especially vulnerable to cat attacks.

TNR is *not* humane to the cats or the wildlife. Free-roaming cats are in constant danger of being hit by cars, contracting diseases and parasites, or being attacked by other animals or people. Cats can transmit diseases such as rabies, toxoplasmosis, and cat scratch fever to humans. In fact, the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has declared that cats are the top carrier of rabies in domestic animals. Sadly, three people in Florida living in the vicinity of TNR feeding sites were recently bitten by rabid cats and had to undergo painful rabies treatments.

For even the best run TNR colony, practitioners will admit that not all of the cats are trapped for vaccination, and the cat food left out for them attracts more cats. Colonies often become dumping grounds for unwanted pets, thus continuing the inhumane cycle. This is why feral cats have about one-third to one-fifth of the life span of indoor, owned cats. Perhaps that is why the National Association of Public Health Veterinarians, The Wildlife Society, and the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals have joined ABC in opposing TNR programs.

In addition, federal, state, and local governments have responsibilities under the Endangered Species Act and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act to conserve birds, and must also carry out their paramount mandate of protecting public's health. Failing to do so can result in legal penalties and civil liability.

ABC suggests communities concerned about these cats work to enact mandatory licensing programs, the fees from which can fund programs to help find homes for the unwanted pets and educate pet owners about keeping their cats indoors. Through the *Cats Indoors!* Campaign, ABC and its many partners encourage people to keep their cats indoors, train them to go outside on a harness and leash, or build outdoor cat enclosures. Cats should be spayed or neutered *before* they can produce an unwanted litter, and should *never* be abandoned. Abandoning cats is illegal in many areas, is extremely cruel to cats, and is detrimental to birds and other wildlife. Further, the

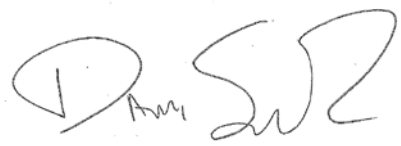
sanctioning of cat colonies by local officials only serves to encourage cat owners to dump more unwanted cats at these sites.

These problems are explained in materials enclosed with this letter and a recent, informative video on TNR and cat colonies, viewable at www.youtube.com/abcbirds

We therefore urge you to issue a policy directive opposing TNR and halt city funding if any is currently being expended. As a society we do not expect to solve dog overpopulation problems by simply turning unwanted dogs loose onto the streets; the same should be true for cats. Ensuring responsible pet ownership is at the core of any long-term solution to the cat overpopulation problem.

If you have any questions please feel free to call Anne Law at 202/234-7181, or email alaw@abcbirds.org.

Sincerely,



Darin Schroeder
Vice President for Conservation Advocacy

American Bird Conservancy (ABC) is a 501(c) (3) national non-profit organization dedicated to the conservation of wild native birds and their habitats throughout the Americas. Founded in 1994, ABC is the only U.S. based group dedicated solely to overcoming the greatest threats facing native birds in the Western Hemisphere.