



**WildCat Conservation  
Legal Aid Society**

WildCat Conservation Legal Aid Society  
1725 I Street NW  
Suite 300  
Washington, DC 20006

Phone: 202-349-3760  
Fax: 202-349-3915  
info@wcclas.org  
www.wcclas.org

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VIA Email: [joshua\\_winchell@fws.gov](mailto:joshua_winchell@fws.gov)

Joshua Winchell  
Council Designated Federal Officer  
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service  
National Wildlife Refuge System  
5275 Leesburg Pike  
Falls Church, VA 22041-3803

**Re: Wildlife and Hunting Heritage Conservation  
Council Meeting March 23, 2016  
Meeting Presentation Comments**

Dear Mr. Winchell:

Contained below are the comments I presented to the Wildlife and Hunting Heritage Conservation Council on Wednesday, March 23, 2016:

Madame Chair, Members of the Council, and guests – thank you for the opportunity to provide additional information on our submission for your consideration.

My name is Lisa Salamat. I am the CEO of WildCat Conservation Legal Aid Society. Our mission is to protect and defend all native and non-native wildcats.

We are engaged in an initiative to end the practice of canned, caged or confined hunts of native and non-native wildcats. As described in our letter to council, we are seeking your support of this initiative and to advise the Secretaries of Interior and Agriculture whose duties are to protect, regulate and enforce activities related to endangered and threatened species.

Over the past 25 years, legislation was introduced in the House and Senate to ban canned hunting and in recent years computer assisted remote hunting; all failed to make it past committee review.

Less than half of the State legislatures, has in some form, banned or restricted this activity to certain species—the others are silent. The inconsistency in state laws regarding canned-hunts is also confusing to the public. We receive numerous emails about canned-hunting activities in Texas. What we explain is that Texas is one of the states that ban canned hunting of big cats—**but not** canned-hunting.

This is why it is imperative that regulations regarding canned hunting are most appropriate at the federal level.

We understand that hunting is a human practice and activity that historical has taken place in the U.S. and globally for numerous generations, however, what was once a necessary activity for survival is now defined as a sport—a sport that should be conducted as any other sport with integrity.

Canned hunting is in opposition of any reasonable definition of sport hunting and we are finding more and more hunting associations and hunters themselves who are opposed to this practice, have made public statements condoning the activity, and are unwilling to ever participate in it.

On March 4, 2016, the Namibia Professional Hunting Association released their position statement on canned hunts – in it they state:

“There are certain negative trends of trophy hunting, which we like to describe as trophy collecting as opposed to true hunting. The difference being that trophy collectors are some ego driven personalities, trying to feed their vanity by boasting with a collection of outstanding or rare trophies, with little desire or interest to enjoy an original hunting experience while obtaining these trophies. This has led to some truly abhorrent practices like canned hunting, put and take and others.”

“We do not question the important role of conservation groups to watch over basic conduct and to point out malpractices like canned hunting, and pseudohunts which feed the illegal trade in wildlife products or criticize corruption. The NPHA has condemned these happenings.”

In South Africa—where lions are captive bred, hand reared by humans, allowed to be petted, walked with, and feed by tourists, are then shot by humans in a canned hunt. While this is a growing industry in South Africa, Hermann Meyerdricks, president of the Professional Hunters’ Association of South Africa, is asking the hunting association to reconsider its position on lion hunting: he states:

“From my dealings with the media and the community, it has become clear to me that those against the hunting of lions bred in captivity are no longer just a small if vociferous group of animal rights activists. Broader society is no longer neutral on this question and the tide of public opinion is turning strongly against this form of hunting, however it is termed. Even within our own ranks, as well as in the hunting fraternity as a whole, respected voices are speaking out publicly against it.”

Here in the U.S. an article published in Field and Stream interviewed hunters regarding the practice. We were quite relieved to learn that “The experience just doesn't mean anything to them.”

Many hunters say they would never go after confined game. They call it canned hunting no matter how big the enclosure is and say it threatens the foundations of the sport. But those who pursue game at the estimated 1,000 high-fence operations across the country (there is no national regulatory system, so getting an exact number is impossible) the high-fence industry continues to expand, driven by a market for hunting experiences targeting everything.

Boone & Crocket issued a statement specifically banning canned-hunt animals from record-book consideration if they have been "transported for the purpose of commercial shooting" or are "confined by artificial barriers, including escape-proof fenced enclosures."

A poll taken by Safari Club International revealed an interesting contradiction. "83 percent of the people polled thought that you should have the right to hunt behind high fences. But that same group said that they would not participate in the activity themselves." Unlike Boone & Crockett, SCI allows animals taken in a canned hunt to be worthy of inclusion in their record-book.

We applaud USFWS for the new rule and listing of African Lions under the ESA and the changes to Lion trophy imports from Africa, we are, however, concerned more than ever that the demand for lion trophies from U.S. hunters will be facilitated by canned hunting operations in the U.S.

Jim Posewitz, a retired wildlife biologist for the State of Montana, Director of Orion: The Hunter's Institute and author of *Inherit the Hunt: A Journey into American Hunting*, in a discussion of high-fence hunting states: "There is an evil seed buried here. By selling these facsimiles of real wild animals, these people degrade the whole reality of hunting. They strip away the concept that man the hunter is engaged in an important activity.

Suddenly, what was wild is domestic—  
What was difficult to obtain is easy—  
What was once valuable is trivial.  
It is a tremendous threat on many levels."

*The mindset of society has and is changing and we have to change with it.*

On behalf of WildCat Conservation Legal Aid Society, we urge you to consider our request and support an initiative to ban the activity of canned hunting of native and non-native wildcats born in captivity or taken from the wild in the United States.

Thank you.

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Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Ann Salamat, Esq.  
*Chief Executive Officer*