



Monique Jacobson
Cabinet Secretary
In care of: Susan Kavanaugh
Executive Assistant
susan.kavanaugh@state.nm.us
New Mexico Tourism Department
491 Old Santa Fe Trail
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87501

Sept. 23, 2013

Dear Secretary Jacobson;

New Mexico has long been known as the “Land of Enchantment.” For wildlife in the state, however, life is becoming less enchanting by the day. We, the undersigned conservation organizations, asked our members and supporters, as well as members of the general public, to suggest a new nickname that better reflects life for New Mexico’s wildlife. We are writing today to present you with the top three suggestions, as well as other responses, and to ask you to support legislation that would prevent cruelty to wildlife and protect New Mexico’s image as the “Land of Enchantment.”

First, we offer an explanation of the circumstances that drove us to take action. A statewide prairie dog killing contest¹ is only the most recent in a long list of abuses to which New Mexico’s wildlife have been subjected. Trapping is nearly unregulated on New Mexico’s public lands. The New Mexico Game Commission recently lifted a trapping ban in the recovery area of the endangered Mexican wolf, despite evidence that trapping is harming the critically imperiled population of just 75 rare animals. Because of leghold traps, two wolves have died, two have full leg amputations, and several are missing toes.

New Mexico uses the second highest number of poison-ejecting devices, called M-44s, for wildlife killing in the nation (only after Texas). M-44s are baited traps designed to lure an animal. When the animal tugs on the lure, toxic sodium cyanide is propelled into the victim’s mouth. These dangerous booby traps are indiscriminant and have imperiled non-target wildlife, killed pets, and injured people. The State also allows unsustainable levels of cougar and black bear hunting.

¹ <http://www.krqe.com/dpp/news/local/central/gun-shop-has-prairie-dog-hunt-contest>

Cities and counties in New Mexico have started taking up arms against prairie dogs. The Clovis City Commission has passed an ordinance declaring prairie dogs a public nuisance and requiring their control.² Chavez County Commissioners have recently passed a county ordinance prohibiting the importation of prairie dogs within Chavez County, much like Curry County Commissioners did this summer. The above-mentioned prairie dog killing contest, organized by a gun shop in Los Lunas, awarded a Smith and Wesson M&P 15-22 rifle to the person who turned in the largest number of “tails.” These multiple threats to prairie dogs are particularly egregious since the Gunnison’s prairie dog is a candidate for listing under the Endangered Species Act in the montane portion of its range, and is listed in New Mexico as a “species of concern.” The U.S. Forest Service considers both Gunnison’s and black-tailed prairie dogs to be “imperiled” in New Mexico. Killing contests that incentivize high wildlife body counts – such as the most recent prairie dog killing contest and more than a dozen others that were held in the last year, mainly targeting coyotes – are legal in New Mexico. The New Mexico legislature recently rejected legislation to ban killing contests.

When presented with this same information, respondents to our survey had a lot to say. In addition to suggestions for a new nickname, we received many unsolicited comments and reactions. Of the 1,580 responses we received to our survey, 134 of them included indications that the respondent was willing, or was planning, to boycott New Mexico until these practices ended. Many people wrote expressing sadness or anger, or offering interesting perspectives and experiences. A few of the most poignant and informative responses are included in the appendix below.

“Land of Entrapment” prevailed by a landslide as the most popular in the on-line poll. One respondent even noted, “Land of Entrapment is what we called [New Mexico] 20 years ago. Not much has changed.” **“The Thrill-Kill State,”** which has a certain poetry to it, was the second-most popular suggestion. Third in the top picks was this double-entendre: **“New Mexico: We’ll Blow You Away!”**

There were a number of runners-up that we wanted to include, either because they were frequently suggested, or because they were particularly creative. Some are purely grim, and some have a dark humor, but all espouse the same message; abuses of wildlife are not “enchanting,” and damage the image of the state.

- New Mexico: If It’s Furry, We Kill It in a Hurry
- The Killing Fields
- The Trappiest Place on Earth
- Land of Endangerment
- Tierra del Muerto
- Land of Disenchantment
- Little Wildlife on the Prairie
- New Mexico: No Country for Wildlife
- Land of N.M. – No Mercy
- Where the Wild Things Were

² <http://www.cnjonline.com/2013/09/12/city-steps-in-on-prairie-dogs/>

We ask you to use your positions as guardians and promoters of New Mexico's image to help stop unnecessary cruelty to wildlife. The Game Commission has repeatedly rejected trapping bans – instead expanding trapping on public land – and the New Mexico legislature rejected legislation to ban trapping and poisons on public lands. The legislature also rejected legislation to ban killing contests. We, and our members and supporters, are asking the Tourism Department to support future legislation that would ban inhumane and unsafe leghold traps on public land, outlaw cruel and destructive killing contests, and remove deadly poisons from our states' wild places.

We love New Mexico and want it to remain the "Land of Enchantment," not just for its human citizens and visitors, but for the state's wildlife as well. For that name to remain true ("New Mexico true," if you will) however, the treatment of wildlife in New Mexico needs to change. The Tourism Department could be an important force in making that change, and we urge you to do so. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Taylor Jones". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Taylor Jones
Endangered Species Advocate
WildEarth Guardians
1536 Wynkoop St., Suite 301
Denver, CO
505-490-5141
tjones@wildearthguardians.org

And on behalf of:

Pat Carlton
People for Native Ecosystems
carlton505@comcast.net
Santa Fe, NM

Guy and Elisabeth Dicharry
Stop Coyote Killing Contests New Mexico
Gdicharry@gmail.com
Los Lunas, NM

Joann Haddock
President
Citizens for Prairie Dogs
citizens4pds@aol.com
Lorenzo, TX

Denise Saccone
President
The **PDAWG** Task Force (**P**rairie **D**og **A**dvocacy **W**atch **G**roup)
deniseone@netzero.net
Santa Fe, NM

CC:

Brian O'Neill
Tourism Development Programs Director
In care of: Brandy Velarde
Executive Assistant
Brandy.Velarde@state.nm.us
New Mexico Tourism Department
491 Old Santa Fe Trail
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87501

Richard Pickering
Director
richard.pickering@state.nm.us
New Mexico Tourism Department
491 Old Santa Fe Trail
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87501

Isabel Duran
Deputy Director
isabel.duran@state.nm.us
New Mexico Tourism Department
491 Old Santa Fe Trail
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87501

Organizations:

WildEarth Guardians

WildEarth Guardians is a non-profit conservation organization based in New Mexico. Guardians protects and restores the wildlife, wild rivers, and wild places of the American West.

The PDAWG Task Force (Prairie Dog Advocacy Watch Group)

The mission of the PDAWG Task Force is to conserve the Gunnison's prairie dogs of Santa Fe in order to safeguard the survival of the species and the natural heritage of Santa Fe and Northern New Mexico.

Citizens for Prairie Dogs

Citizens for Prairie Dogs (CPD) is a Texas-based non-profit association dedicated to the preservation of prairie dogs. CPD wants to educate the public and governing bodies that prairie dogs and humans can peacefully coexist. When conflicts do occur, CPD provides assistance in relocating prairie dogs to an accommodating area. We are currently working in New Mexico attempting to resolve human/prairie dog conflicts.

People for Native Ecosystems

The mission of People for Native Ecosystems is to protect, nurture, and maintain Santa Fe's imperiled population of Gunnison's prairie dogs, as they are vital links in the native ecosystem.

Stop Coyote Killing Contests New Mexico

"Stop Coyote Killing Contests New Mexico" has three goals: to have our political leaders place a moratorium on all wildlife killing contests until studies are completed on the impact these contests have on wildlife, our lands, and our people; enact laws and regulations to ban wildlife killing contests from public lands, and; require hunting licenses for all hunting activity, and set bag limits and seasons for all of our wildlife.

Appendix: Comments and Feedback (edited for spelling)

"Land of Entrapment" seems to fit perfectly. I know, first hand, how cruel traps can be. My beautiful Weimaraner was caught in one. My Lab suffers every day of her life because she was shot in the leg at age 3mo, before I adopted her.

I love this state but I am ashamed of its wanton wildlife killing record. This latest stunt in Los Lunas makes me ill. The bobcat deaths also sadden me. I will do whatever it takes to stop this and change us back to being a genuine Land of Enchantment

New Mexico is a state of disenchantment. If the legislature won't hear our pleas then maybe they will hear this-I will no longer travel as a tourist to Santa Fe and will encourage others to boycott this state due to their inhumanity

I am a professional biologist and ecologist with a long career invested in wildlife conservation and appalled by New Mexico's attitude towards wildlife.

All animals are God's creation and the acts of killing contests, unregulated trapping, poison traps and "prairie dog killing" hunts are a sin against our maker. Please consider those that are affected by your inhumane acts of cruelty!

This is beyond horrible! I have a cat that someone abandoned and he was caught in one of those awful traps. He lost his left front paw. I adopted him and he is a love. It shouldn't happen to him or any animal. This is so cruel and horribly painful.

I had always had the idea that New Mexico was a better state, a state that believed in its people and that all of us on the planet, including animals, were put here for a reason. This image is going, going, GONE. Please put it back.

As a wildlife biologist, I find what your state, and mine, and many others, are cruelly doing to wildlife shows extreme lack of compassion. It rots the soul to allow such torture to animals in live traps and poison baits. Consider more compassionate ways.

I am a landowner in Catron County, NM. My land is strictly off limits to hunters and trappers. I am angered that some of my land use taxes are used to help NM support trappers!

As a Colorado native, I have always enjoyed visiting our enchanting neighbor and her beautiful flora and fauna. Images of such abuse of New Mexico's wildlife has now brought the title "Land of Embarrassment" to mind!

Why are you killing a critical keystone species such as the prairie dog?? Do you care about burrowing owls, raptors, and a host of other species that depend upon the prairie dog to survive? I am shocked and dismayed.

Having travelled in New Mexico a couple of times, and to know, indeed, that it IS a Land of Enchantment, I am HORRIFIED that these abuses are being allowed even encouraged! I agree, has New Mexico become the Land of Entrapment? It frightens me!

I'm from NM and hate to see this state on the wrong side of this issue. Trapping, poisoning, etc. is not sportsmanlike or fair!!!

This puts gun owners in a bad light. Stop the abuses.

I really love New Mexico... Please don't become as infamous as Minnesota and Wisconsin with your anti-wildlife actions!! I would really hate to have to BOYCOTT your state too!

New Mexico is beautiful, but painfully trapping and killing wildlife is an ugly thing to do. You can't call yourselves "Land of Enchantment" when you have a dirty little secret. End killing contests, unregulated trapping, and poison traps.

My father is a happy but not always proud resident of the beautiful state of New Mexico, and he's always trying to get me to move there. But as long as you allow indiscriminate trapping, poisoning and wildlife-slaughter-as-sport, I will NEVER consider it.

I am ashamed of the state that gave me so many fond memories as a child growing up there. Straighten up your act and become more enlightened. Land of the Unenlightened is my suggestion.

As a former professional hunter and trapper, I find these practices totally wrong!!! Guess I don't need to consider visiting NM now or in the future until these practices are stopped!!

New Mexico is fortunate to have such wildlife. It is a turn-off for people from other states to hear of the abuse suffered by that wildlife at the hands of New Mexicans.

I have thought about vacationing in New Mexico this year. I want to be able to explore New Mexico without fear of being shot or caught in a trap. If this is how the state behaves toward its natural heritage, I may cancel those plans.

New Mexico was my home for five years and I love the state. I don't love many of NM's present positions on wildlife. Either change your by-line or change your positions on encouraging killings.

Cavalier maiming, poisoning. Torture, and murder of sentient beings is not enchanting. Using public land (their home) for contests, entertainment, and a killing field is against public policy, unconscionable, and an atrocity. Not enchanting.

I live in the East Mountains of New Mexico and heartily support this effort. Our very fine local Animal Protection of NM has collected thousands of signatures to outlaw trapping on public lands, but state pols refuse to enact the ban.