



January 24, 2024

The Honorable Marie Waldron  
California State Assembly  
State Capitol Building  
Sacramento, CA 95814

*Submitted electronically*

**RE: Assembly Bill 1828: Personal income taxes: voluntary contributions: Endangered and Rare Fish, Wildlife, and Plant Species Conservation and Enhancement Account: Native California Wildlife Rehabilitation Voluntary Tax Contribution Fund: covered grants. - SUPPORT**

Dear Assemblymember Waldron,

On behalf of San Diego Humane Society, it is my pleasure to submit this letter of support for AB 1828 to allow California income tax filers to voluntarily ‘check off’ a specified amount to fund native wildlife rescue organizations in California or to support the Department of Fish and Wildlife’s efforts to protect endangered and rare fish, wildlife and plat species. We were the proud sponsors of your successful legislation to create the Native California Wildlife Rehabilitation Voluntary Tax Contribution Fund in 2017. Given the extraordinary success this fund has been, we are thrilled to again support the work of wildlife rehabilitators throughout the state by sponsoring AB 1828 to ensure continuance of this fund as well as the Rare and Endangered Species Preservation Voluntary Tax Contribution Program for another seven years.

San Diego Humane Society has been serving San Diego County since 1880, is the contracted agency to provide animal care and control for 13 municipalities in San Diego County and operates campuses in San Diego, El Cajon, Escondido, Oceanside and Ramona. We offer San Diegans, and beyond, a wide range of programs and services that strengthen the human-animal bond, prevent cruelty/neglect, provide medical care, educate the community on the humane treatment of animals and provide safety net services for all pet families needing assistance with keeping their pets.

Project Wildlife (SDHS PW), a San Diego Humane Society program, is dedicated to rescue, rehabilitation, and release of native wildlife. SDHS PW employs 43 dedicated staff members and 242 committed volunteers to give injured, orphaned, and sick wild animals a second chance at life. This commitment to helping wild animals has grown tremendously in the past decade and Project Wildlife is now one of the largest wildlife rehabilitation organizations in the country. Our mission is to improve the quality of life for local wildlife and the community. In FY 22-23 alone, SDHS PW admitted 10,092 patients across 242 unique species.

**SAN DIEGO HUMANE SOCIETY**

5500 Gaines St., San Diego, CA 92110

Campus locations in El Cajon, Escondido, Oceanside, Ramona and San Diego

**SDHUMANE.ORG | 619-299-7012**

### ***Native California Wildlife Rehabilitation Voluntary Tax Contribution Fund***

The [Native California Wildlife Rehabilitation Voluntary Tax Contribution Fund](#) has been an unquestionable success since its launch in 2018, raising over a quarter million dollars in its first year and exceeding that threshold each year since. The Rare and Endangered Species Preservation Voluntary Tax Contribution Program has been around much longer and generates even more support each year.

<b><u>Native California Wildlife Rehabilitation Voluntary Tax Contribution Fund</u></b>	
<b>Tax Year</b>	<b>Valid Contributions</b>
2018	\$254,327
2019	\$255,605
2020	\$318,351
2021	\$465,685
2022	\$349,586
2023	\$318,078
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,961,632</b>

The grants funded by the contributions to support native wildlife rehabilitation have made it possible for the Department of Fish and Wildlife to award more than \$2 million dollars to fifty-five (55)<sup>1</sup> licensed, nonprofit rehabilitation organizations to date. Many eligible wildlife rehabilitators in California have received much-needed financial assistance through this competitive grant program.

- **2023** grants: **47** permitted wildlife rehabilitators applied for **\$629,000** in funding
- **2022** grants: **47** permitted wildlife rehabilitators applied for **\$547,000** in funding
- **2021** grants: **45** permitted wildlife rehabilitators applied for **\$549,000** in funding

The Department's [Native Wildlife Rehabilitation Grants Program](#) supports California's diverse community of wildlife rehabilitation professionals throughout the state. Grants funds are used to advance the recovery and rehabilitation of injured, sick, or orphaned native wildlife. Funds have supported facility operations, innovations in animal care (e.g., refinement of wildlife rehabilitation techniques, pre-release conditioning), enclosure design improvements, dietary or behavioral enrichment, species-appropriate diet; and wildlife conservation education efforts (often in underserved communities).

The grants produced by this Fund constitute the sole dedicated government (federal, state, or local) funding for native wildlife rehabilitation in California. This grant funding is critical for organizations like ours to continue our mission of protecting California's wildlife.

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<sup>1</sup> Fifty-five unique nonprofits have applied for and been awarded grants during the three rounds of awards (2021, 2022, 2023). Some organizations have received grants during each round. Award notices for the grant round that closed October 15, 2023, have not yet been sent.

***Rare and Endangered Species Preservation Voluntary Tax Contribution Program***

Contributions to the Rare and Endangered Species Preservation Voluntary Tax Contribution Program support conservation actions that help protect hundreds of rare, threatened and endangered plants and animals within our state. California is home to more than 5,000 native plant species and more than 1,000 native animal species. At least one third of plants, and two thirds of animals are endemic species that occur nowhere else in the world. Loss of habitat, water management conflicts, invasive species and climate change are the greatest threats to their long-term survival.

<u><b>Rare and Endangered Species Preservation Voluntary Tax Contribution Program</b></u>	
<b>Tax Year</b>	<b>Valid Contributions</b>
2018	\$481,058
2019	\$546,565
2020	\$545,908
2021	\$579,719
2022	\$479,150
2023	\$441,935
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$3,074,335</b>

Currently, the Rare and Endangered Species Program supports staff working on the listing and recovery of California Endangered Species Act petitioned and listed native plant and wildlife species. The voluntary donations for rare and endangered species helped fund surveys and monitoring for some of California’s most imperiled plant species.

***Advance payments***

We appreciate the inclusion of new language authorizing advance payments as an option for ensuring grant funds can get out expeditiously, and to limit administrative burden for both the state and these nonprofits. Given the small size of these grants (e.g., the range is from \$3,000 to \$19,000), this authorization is justified and will help ensure equitable and timely distributions.

We are deeply grateful to you for your continued commitment to wildlife, little and large. Thank you for your leadership on this important issue and please let us know how we can assist in supporting AB 1828 as the bill advances through the legislative process.

Sincerely,



Julianna Tetlow  
Director of Government Relations  
San Diego Humane Society

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