

Video Statement by Washington State Public Lands Chief Urges Feds to Abandon Plan to Kill Half-Million Barred Owls

Hilary Franz manages millions of acres of public lands, and says killing scheme offers no guarantees, and that 'we can do better'

SEATTLE, WASHINGTON, UNITED STATES, June 21, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- In a video statement, Hilary S. Franz, Commissioner of Public Lands for Washington state, pointedly urged U.S. Fish and Wildlife to abandon its proposal to spend nearly a quarter-billion-dollars to kill nearly a half-million barred owls over the next three decades.

Her speech was given at a virtual meeting among wildlife advocates where she indicated that as the manager of 2 million acres of forest lands and 1 million additional acres in Washington state, she remains deeply committed to protecting wildlife — including the Northern spotted owl — but does not support a plan to shoot barred owls, because it is unworkable, costly and inhumane.



Barred Owl photo by USFWS

"I don't believe that a decades-long plan to kill nearly half-a-million barred owls across 14 million acres of land represents a solution that is absolutely viable, affordable or capable — in fact it raises an enormous amount of questions," Franz said in a video that was part of a June 20

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former U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service wildlife biologist Kent Livezey

webinar for Animal Wellness Action. “How can we prevent the surviving barred owls from simply recolonizing and repopulating the very areas we are trying to preserve? I think we can do better, and we have too many questions that need to be answered.”

The video of full comments by Public Lands Commissioner Hilary Franz can be found here:

<https://youtu.be/KLgYh5AYVdg>

A link to the full June 20 Claudia Miller Ignite Series on Animal Welfare by Animal Wellness Action can be found here:

<https://youtu.be/CnAlrRGSroE>

The webinar included former U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service wildlife biologist Kent Livezey, who has estimated the cost of the barred owl kill plan at \$235,000,000 — making it one of the most expensive endangered species management projects ever. He noted that in one of his dozen peer-reviewed publications concerning the competition between these two species, that no more than about 40 raptors had been killed annually to address negative effects between raptors and other native birds in the United States. But that was in 2010, before the Service started killing Barred Owls. The EIS proposes to kill about half a million Barred Owls, which is 12,000 times more than that. “To say that this is unprecedented is an understatement,” he reports.

Wayne Pacelle, president of Animal Wellness Action stated, “Every sensible person wants to save spotted owls from extinction, but strategies that kill a half-million look-alike forest owls must be taken off the table in violating our norms about proper treatment of any native owl species in North America,” Pacelle said. “The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has a responsibility to protect spotted owls under the Endangered Species Act, but it also has a responsibility to protect barred owls under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Both species deserve protection from human harm, but it’s a bridge too far to manage inter-species competition between owls in a way that produces a massive body count of these beautiful forest denizens popular among millions of Americans.”

Franz noted in the webinar she had written a letter earlier this week to U.S. Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland in an effort to ask Haaland to sit down with her and her office to discuss other options to protect the Northern spotted owl. [Her letter is posted here.](#)

U.S. Fish and Wildlife has proposed action to kill nearly 500,000 barred owls in California, Oregon, and Washington over the next three decades to reduce competitive pressures adversely affecting the threatened Northern spotted owl and the California spotted owl. The agency took public comments for 60 days, concluding that process on Jan. 16 and a final decision is pending.

Organizations led by Animal Wellness Action and the Center for a Humane Economy also wrote to Secretary Haaland with concerns about the impracticality of the plan, its price tag of nearly a quarter-billion dollars, and their moral concerns about amassing an enormous body count of barred owls protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act as a North American native species. The list of organizations signing that letter has now swelled to 129 and now includes 20 local Audubon society chapters, including several in Washington State.

ABOUT

Animal Wellness Action is a Washington, D.C.-based 501(c)(4) whose mission is to help animals by promoting laws and regulations at federal, state and local levels that forbid cruelty to all animals. The group also works to enforce existing anti-cruelty and wildlife protection laws. Animal Wellness Action believes helping animals helps us all. X: @AWAction_News

The Center for a Humane Economy is a Washington, D.C.-based 501(c)(3) whose mission is to help animals by helping forge a more humane economic order. The Center encourages businesses to honor their social responsibilities in a culture where consumers, investors, and other key stakeholders abhor cruelty and the degradation of the environment and embrace innovation as a means of eliminating both. The Center believes helping animals helps us all. X: @TheHumaneCenter

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