



BOARD OF SUPERVISORS COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES

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JANICE HAHN

SUPERVISOR, FOURTH DISTRICT

August 31, 2026

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor of California
1021 O Street, Suite 9000
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Governor Newsom,

I am writing to you with an urgent request: **Please step in and stop the systematic slaughter of Catalina Island's beloved deer population.**

Tomorrow, September 1, under a permit issued by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Catalina Island Conservancy can begin killing the thousands of mule deer that have lived on Catalina Island for over a century.

I have raised my concerns about this plan with the Department of Fish and Wildlife before. I strongly opposed the Conservancy's permit application because I believe eradicating an entire population of animals that have been part of Catalina's landscape for nearly a century is an extreme, unnecessary response that poses serious unintended consequences.

Tony Marrone, our Los Angeles County Fire Chief, who is responsible for fire operations on Catalina Island, has warned that **completely eliminating the deer could increase wildfire risk**. The deer are currently eating vegetation that would otherwise become fuel for fires. Removing them would allow the brush to grow uncontrolled, making future fires more likely and more dangerous.

We have already seen this play out with devastating consequences. Years ago, the deer population was completely eliminated on Santa Rosa Island. Just earlier this year, Santa Rosa Island suffered the largest fire in this island's history, burning more than 18,000 acres.

While we are lucky that Santa Rosa Island is unpopulated, Catalina is home to nearly 4,000 residents, with many more tourists visiting the island daily. Catalina is already a fire-prone island, and these deer have been keeping the flammable brush at bay. We should not allow this dangerous experiment to go forward when our own Fire Chief is warning us that it could have unintended consequences for public safety.

I continue to hear from people who live on Catalina and from visitors who have developed a deep connection to these animals. Mule deer may not have originated on the island, but they have been part of Catalina's landscape for generations. **They are alive today, and once they are gone, they are gone forever.**

I understand that the Conservancy believes the deer are damaging the island's native ecosystem. I share the goal of protecting Catalina's unique environment. But **protecting Catalina does not have to mean killing every mule deer on the island.** I have spoken with many experts, including former leaders of the Catalina Island Conservancy, who are confident the island can sustain a small herd of 200 deer that can be responsibly managed.

Unfortunately, none of these consequences were properly reviewed by the State because the California Department of Fish and Wildlife allowed the permit to be approved with a CEQA exemption. I believe this was irresponsible and rash.

There is a lawsuit that has been filed by a coalition of people opposed to the Conservancy's plan. That is scheduled to be heard by a judge tomorrow, September 1.

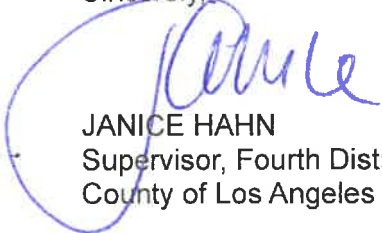
Nevertheless, Governor, I am asking you to intervene now.

Please suspend or revoke this permit and give California the opportunity to take another look at whether total eradication is truly necessary—and whether we can protect Catalina's ecosystem without eliminating its deer.

This is our last chance to pause before the killing begins. I hope you will act.

Thank you for your consideration and for your leadership.

Sincerely,



JANICE HAHN
Supervisor, Fourth District
County of Los Angeles