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Injurious Wildlife Species; Constrictor Snakes from Python, Boa, and Eunectes Genera

Comment On: [FWS-R9-FHC-2008-0015-1397](#)

Injurious Wildlife Species: Listing the Boa Constrictor, Four Python Species, and Four Anaconda Species as Injurious Reptiles

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Comment on FR Doc # 2010-04956

Submitter Information

Name: Penny Marie Danielewicz

Address:

Buffalo, NY, 14214

Organization: Buffalo Zoo

General Comment

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Public Comments Processing
ATTN: FWS-R9-FHC-2008-0015
Division of Policy and Directives Management
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
4401 N. Fairfax Drive, Room 222
Arlington, VA 22203

Dear Sir:

This letter is in response to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's proposed addition of large constricting snakes to the list of injurious wildlife as defined and regulated under the Lacey Act. The listing of these nine forms of snake will have a significant negative impact on the operations of the Buffalo Zoo. We fully acknowledge that there are legitimate

concerns about invasive injurious species; however, we strongly believe that the issue of invasive tropical snakes is a local matter and should be addressed in the few states where it is a potential problem, not at the federal level for all states. The proposed regulations will also create an unnecessary burden on the Buffalo Zoo and other zoological institutions without providing any effective environmental protection. To clarify our position, we would like to provide the following information:

The Buffalo Zoo- Background

In continuous operation for 135 years, the Buffalo Zoo is a not-for-profit zoological institution that serves the public in the Great Lakes regions of Erie and Niagara. Governed by the Zoological Society of Buffalo Inc., the Zoo is funded by earned revenues, memberships, donations and public support (Erie County and New York State). Our attendance record is strong and since 2007 we have seen over 400,000 guests come through our gates. The Buffalo Zoo memberships are held by 18,000 households or families. The Buffalo Zoo is a vital local economic force and employs 125 Western New Yorkers.

The Buffalo Zoo is more than an attraction; its commitment to conservation is unambiguous. Conservation and education are central to the overall operations of the institution as articulated in the institutional mission statement: "The Zoological Society of Buffalo Inc. is an independent, non-profit corporation organized for the establishment, maintenance and operation of the Zoological Gardens; for the education and recreation of the people and visitors of the Niagara Frontier; for the advancement and encouragement of the science of zoology; for the practice of conservation of the worlds' wildlife; and for the exhibition of diverse species of animals from throughout the world." To meet its mission, the Zoo provides environmental and conservation education programs, captive breeding services for reintroduction programs, and conducts conservation related research. The Zoo has a long history of partnership with the U.S. F&WS and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. Its involvement in international conservation efforts is well known. Currently the Zoo is directly involved in conservations efforts in Puerto Rico and Panama. The Zoo has a particular interest in snake conservation, working with the Eastern Massasauga rattlesnake Species Survival Program, which has significant field conservation components and our successful propagation of the managed captive populations of Mexican lance-headed rattlesnakes and Eastern indigo snakes.

Buffalo Zoo - Impact on Education Outreach Programs

The Buffalo Zoo provides education outreach programs to schools and other institutions in a wide area of New York. These programs are considered an essential element of the Zoo's mission. Boa constrictors are flagship species for these outreach education activities. Their impressive size and docile disposition make them ideal to provide the basis for explaining complex tropical ecosystems. Students learn that all species and forms have a place in the ecosystem --- even the ones which with they may not empathize. Providing an opportunity for children to closely view and even touch these

majestic animals decreases children's fears, generates appreciation of and respect for snakes, and helps break the cycle of persecution that has caused declines in many snake populations throughout the world.

The inclusion of these nine taxa of snake on the list of injurious wildlife will make the use of any of these forms in interstate education programs virtually impossible. Additionally it will hamper programs within New York. Even though there is virtually no possibility that any of these animals could become established locally in the harsh climate of New York, the Act requires strict and uninterrupted double containment for injurious species thus preventing any direct contact between students and animals. Furthermore, the cost of specimen replacement will increase dramatically. The permit preparation time, administrative cost, permit fees, and time delays will be a major hindrance to continuing these programs. The result will be that these species will have to be eliminated from many excellent conservation education programs.

Conclusion

The Buffalo Zoo is extremely concerned about the problem of introduced invasive species into the United States and would support appropriate and effective responses. Still, this current proposal to include these nine snake taxa as injurious species under the Lacey Act does little to address the issue that is clearly a local concern for the most tropical areas of the country. The Buffalo Zoo strongly believes that the most effective management of this issue would be on the state level, where there is the appropriate authority and infrastructure to manage naturalized invasive wildlife. National level administration through Lacey Act regulation will be ineffective and do little to address the ecological issues currently in Florida. Further, it will require significant Federal resource allocations to administrate and enforce. Considering that the current protracted processing time for U.S. F&WS permit applications, new resources would be necessary. This rule appears to provide little environmental benefit and has significant costs on every level. It will place an undue burden on this and other zoological institutions, both financially and programmatically. In addition, it will create an unnecessary burden on the Office of Management Authority and enforcement sections of the F&WS, which need to direct their limited resources effectively. This proposed rule should not be implemented.

Thank you for considering our comments.

Yours truly,

Penny Danielewicz Donna Fernandes, PhD
Herpetological Manager President/CEO