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Coalition of scientists and more than 25 wildlife protection groups ask Georgia officials to cancel statewide coyote killing contest

Atlanta, Georgia — Today a coalition of scientists with Project Coyote and more than 25 wildlife and animal protection organizations that are part of the National Coalition to End Wildlife Killing Contests (“Coalition”) delivered two letters to Georgia Governor Nathan Deal, Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Commissioner Mark Williams, and Georgia Wildlife Resources Division Rusty Garrison, urging the cancellation of the controversial “Georgia Coyote Challenge.”

The contest, launched in 2017 by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and currently running from March to August, 2018, is akin to a bounty program—which the Georgia DNR has opposed as ineffective. In its 2015-2024 Deer Management Plan, the agency states that its Wildlife Resources Division and the General Assembly “oppose county bounty programs because there is no documented scientific evidence indicating that bounty programs temporarily or permanently reduce coyote abundance.” The prize for indiscriminately killing the most coyotes is a lifetime Georgia hunting license.

The Georgia Coyote Challenge is opposed by a significant number of Georgia citizens, as well as Georgia-based wildlife protection organizations and scientists. In addition, the challenge, along with similar wildlife killing contests held in Georgia and throughout the U.S., contravenes modern, science-based wildlife management principles and could damage the reputation of the state’s sportsmen and sportswomen.

“Wildlife killing contests are antithetical to responsible hunting ethics that encourage respect for wildlife and their habitat and discourage non-frivolous use of wildlife,” said Coalition member Christopher Mowry, Ph.D., associate professor of biology at Berry College, director of the Atlanta Coyote Project, and Project Coyote Science Advisory Board member. “To better reflect modern scientific understanding of natural ecosystems and to better align with the view of Georgia residents that animals—including wildlife—should be treated humanely, we respectfully urge our state’s officials to cancel the Coyote Challenge and to consider prohibiting similar events.”

Mowry and other scientists with Project Coyote condemned the state agency-sanctioned “Georgia Coyote Challenge,” [stating in a letter citing peer-reviewed research](#), “This purported management tool is nothing more than a wildlife killing contest, tempting participants to kill coyotes for a chance to win a lifetime hunting license.”

“Scientific evidence does not support the notion that indiscriminately killing coyotes through events such as the Georgia Coyote Challenge is an effective wildlife management practice, increases game populations, or reduces conflicts with people, pets, or livestock,” said Camilla Fox, executive director of Project Coyote, a founding member of the coalition. “Indeed, the lethal control of coyotes in these types of contests may lead to more coyotes and more conflicts.”

“The Georgia Coyote Challenge is deliberately scheduled to occur when coyotes are raising their young. Killing adult coyotes at that time will leave dependent pups to die from thirst, starvation, predation or exposure,” said Jill Fritz, director of wildlife protection at the Humane Society of the United States, a founding member of the Coalition. “The contest also promotes the killing of coyotes in cruel body-gripping traps, an indiscriminate practice that often results in injury, pain, suffering or death of target

and non-target animals—including companion animals and potentially even threatened and endangered wildlife.”

California and Vermont have already enacted prohibitions against these types of contests, and Colorado and Maryland have adopted regulations to restrict them. Recently the city council of Albuquerque, New Mexico, unanimously passed a resolution condemning coyote killing contests and calling for a statewide ban.

The Coalition is calling on the Georgia DNR to respect this national trend and cancel future stagings of the Georgia Coyote Challenge, and also to support efforts to prohibit similar wildlife killing contests within the state.

To view a copy of the National Coalition to End Wildlife Killing Contests’ letter, please click [here](#).

To view a copy of Project Coyote’s science, letter click [here](#).

To read Project Coyote’s Notes from the Field interview with Dr. Chris Mowry, click [here](#).

Related: Project Coyote’s exposé about wildlife killing contests, [KILLING GAMES: Wildlife In The Crosshairs](#), is now receiving excellent reviews in film festivals across the U.S. In early May, the Humane Society of the United States released a [video](#) of its undercover investigation revealing the callous and brutal reality of wildlife killing contests.

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The National Coalition to End Wildlife Killing Contests applies the combined expertise and experience of its 27 member organizations to work toward ending wildlife killing contests, derbies, and tournaments in the United States.