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YERKES DROPS BID TO KILL ENDANGERED SPECIES

Move Follows Storm of Opposition From Animal Protection Groups

Washington, D.C. — Yerkes National Primate Research Center has withdrawn a controversial application for a permit amendment filed with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) that, if approved, would have dramatically undermined the U.S. Endangered Species Act by allowing lethal research on scores of protected primates, ultimately resulting in their slaughter. Tanya Sanerib of Meyer Glitzenstein & Crystal—lead counsel for a broad coalition of animal protection organizations opposed to the permit—called the withdrawal a “vitally important decision that spares the lives of sensitive, intelligent, and endangered primates and protects the integrity of the Endangered Species Act.”

Yerkes applied for permission to kill 30 endangered sooty mangabeys—tree-dwelling monkeys native to Africa—simply because the facility claimed that it lacked sufficient space for them. Yerkes also wanted to perform lethal experiments on up to 100 other mangabeys. Ten groups submitted extensive comments to FWS in opposition to Yerkes’ request, asserting that granting the request would be a direct violation of the Endangered Species Act, a law that embodies the national consensus that animals in danger of extinction should be protected.

“If the application had been approved,” Sanerib continued, “it would have established a dangerous precedent for further commercial exploitation of animals who are currently protected because of their potential for extinction. This is not only a win for these specific animals but also for all species protected under the Endangered Species Act.”

The conservation experts who contributed to the submission in opposition to the permit request pointed out that Yerkes’ proposed experiments would not have offered any value in terms of the conservation of mangabeys. Furthermore, a payment proposed in the permit would have amounted to a “pay to take” authorization, which is not allowed under the Endangered Species Act. “Applications to take endangered species *must* show a genuine conservation benefit for that species,” Sanerib concluded. “The organizations we represent, which maintain a strong interest in protecting imperiled wildlife globally, advocate *in situ* conservation, anti-poaching, and habitat-protection efforts as the top priorities in wildlife protection.”

Groups involved in the effort to stop Yerkes include Animal Legal Defense Fund, Animal Welfare Institute, American Anti-Vivisection Society, Born Free USA, In Defense of Animals, International Primate Protection League, New England Anti-Vivisection Society, The Animal Protection Institute, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, and Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine.

Media Questions and Interview Requests:

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