

RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF PRESERVING OCELOTS IN THE RIO GRANDE VALLEY

WHEREAS, the last remaining ocelots in the United States are found only in Texas. There are an estimated 50 of these native, wild cats living in the United States and all are located in deep in South Texas; and

WHEREAS, prior to the 1960s, ocelots ranged over southern Texas from the dense chaparral of the Rio Grande Valley east to the Big Thicket and well into Central Texas, Arkansas and Louisiana; and

WHEREAS, the success of protecting these endangered cats depends upon the participation and cooperation of all counties, conservation groups, government agencies and concerned citizens; and

WHEREAS, the ocelot is primarily nocturnal, these powerfully built cats are solitary and territorial. Fully grown, they stand about a foot high and measure about 3 feet long from nose to tail. They have a long ringed or barred tail and their rounded ears are black with a single, large white spot; and

WHEREAS, the single greatest threat to ocelots is loss of habitat. Ocelots' natural habitat is thorn scrub – the thick brush that can be seen scattered across the Valley. In the Rio Grande Valley, as much as 98 percent of ocelot habitat has been removed for agriculture and development, making the lack of native vegetation difficult for ocelots to establish new territories and find the shelter they need to rest, feed and raise their young; and

WHEREAS, the loss of habitation forces them to cross major highways searching for new homes. According to the Wildlife Service, 40 percent of ocelot deaths can be attributed to being hit and killed by cars; and

WHEREAS, the Conservation Fund and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced on November 4, 2014 that the endangered ocelot gained ground thanks to a South Texas ranching family. More than 7,400 acres of ranch land near the Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge in Willacy County was protected through a conservation easement granted by the Frank Yuturria family, which provides vital habitat for two endangered species, the ocelot and the aplomado falcon; and

WHEREAS, habitat restoration needs to be a top priority in preserving the remaining ocelots that inhabit the Rio Grande Valley. It is imperative we create a wildlife corridor and restore habitat for these federal endangered species; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that Hidalgo County Commissioners Court supports the protection of ocelots and preservation of its natural habitats.

Dated this 5th, day of May 2015.

RAMON GARCIA
County Judge

A.C. CUELLAR, JR.
County Commissioner, Pct. 1

EDUARDO "EDDIE" CANTU
County Commissioner, Pct. 2

JOE M. FLORES
County Commissioner, Pct.3

JOSEPH PALACIOS
County Commissioner, Pct. 4

Attest: ARTURO GUAJARDO, JR.
County Clerk