

May 6, 2021

Lieutenant Mitchell Goode  
Northern District Office  
California Department of Fish and Wildlife

[northernenforcementdistrict@wildlife.ca.gov](mailto:northernenforcementdistrict@wildlife.ca.gov)

**Via email**

Re: Request to Investigate Steve Martin for Apparent Violations of 14 CCR § 671.2

Dear Lt. Goode,

I am writing on behalf of PETA and its more than 6.5 million members and supporters worldwide to request that the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) investigate Steve Martin dba Steve Martin's Working Wildlife for apparent violations of the California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Section 671.2 by allowing an adult Kodiak bear named Tag to have direct contact with the public at a campaign event for John Cox in Sacramento, California.

On May 4, 2021, California gubernatorial candidate John Cox held a campaign event in Miller Regional Park (2701 Marina View Dr., Sacramento, CA 95818) that [featured Tag](#) the bear. Tag is a Kodiak bear [owned and exhibited by Steve Martin](#). Ex. A (Steve Martin Restricted Species Permit No. 1228, listing Tag in the inventory of animals). Photographs and videos of Tag at this event show him in direct contact with and in close proximity to the public. See [Video 1](#) (Cox feeding Tag); [Video 2](#) (Tag in close proximity to the public, and Cox feeding him); [Video 3](#) (Tag within a few feet of the public); [Video 4](#) at 5:30 (Tag walks away from handler, Keith Bauer); Ex. B (Tag sitting within a few feet of Cox).

Steve Martin's restricted species permit states that "[t]he permittee is required to follow all of the applicable requirements listed in § 671, Title 14, of the California Code of Regulations (CCR)." Ex. A. Section 671.2(a)(10) requires that animals "be handled so there is *no perceived risk to the public* . . . with sufficient distance allowed between animal acts and the viewing public to assure safety to both the public and the animals." Cal. Code Regs. tit. 14, § 671.2(a)(10) (emphasis added). Section 671.2(a)(10) also requires that "[a]nimals on display shall be contained within an escape-proof area or enclosure at all times when not under the immediate control of a handler." *Id.* A restricted species permit "may be suspended or revoked at any time . . . for failure to comply with the terms and conditions of the permit or for failure to comply with any provision of the Fish and Game Code or regulations adopted pursuant thereto." *Id.* § 671.1(c)(6). The CDFW can also assess a "civil penalty of not less than five hundred dollars (\$500) nor more than ten thousand dollars (\$10,000) for each violation." Cal. Fish & Game Code § 2125(a).

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Tag is a full-grown nine-year-old male Kodiak bear. Ex. A. Bears are inherently dangerous wild animals and [captive bears](#) have caused at least 6 documented deaths and over 60 documented human injuries in the United States since 1990. The photographs and videos from Cox’s event show Tag dangerously close to and in direct contact with Cox himself and within a few feet of the other guests, which demonstrates a clear “perceived risk to the public.” See e.g., [Video 1](#) at 0:30 (Cox is standing within the “barrier” and closer to Tag than the handler, and is feeding the bear); [Video 2](#) at 00:55 (Tag is within a few feet of the public when handler Bauer is much further away, and behind the bear); [Video 3](#) (Tag is laying down within a few feet of the public); [Video 4](#) at 5:30 (Tag walks away from handler Bauer and is allowed to roam within the “barrier”); Ex. B (multiple photos of Tag sitting within a few feet of Cox, who is behind the “barrier” and out of reach of handler Bauer).

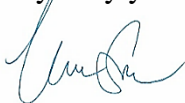
Tag was not confined “within an escape proof area” and he was not under the “immediate control of a handler” at all times while within this temporary “barrier.” See e.g., [Video 4](#) at 5:30. It appears that there were two thin strands of electric wire in front of the guests, which is the only barrier set up to prevent Tag from walking into the crowd. *Id.*; see also Ex. B. However, the top strand of wire appears to be only a few feet off the ground, and would certainly not prevent Tag from reaching the crowd standing behind this barrier. Kodiak bears have long, sharp claws and powerful shoulder muscles used for digging. They are inherently dangerous and can swipe without warning inflicting disfiguring wounds often to the face, scalp and upper body leading to hemorrhage, infection, and death. Kodiak bears are surprisingly swift and can sprint to speeds of up to 20 miles per hour (i.e., close to 30 feet per second), which can leave anyone in close proximity with no time to react or escape. [According to Darren Minier](#), Assistant Director of Animal Care at the Oakland Zoo, “a hot wire is not really going to stop” a bear, and “[i]f the hot wire is strong enough to actually stop the bear, it’s a danger (for people) to be around.” Indeed, it has been reported that the hot wire was not in fact electrified, see [Video 5](#) at 1:24, in which case the only barrier between this adult Kodiak bear and the public was a string. Cox, Martin, Bauer, and everyone who attended this event is extremely lucky that nothing happened because if it did, there was nothing to prevent Tag from seriously injuring or even killing someone.

In addition to being a recklessly unsafe display of an extremely dangerous wild animal, Darrien Minier [explained](#) that this type of stunt is also problematic because it gives the public the wrong impression of how bears should be handled: “When people go to Tahoe or national parks and see a bear, we don’t want them taking selfies with them. It’s these types of publicity stunts that really erode people’s abilities to understand how to interact safely with these animals.”

The conditions under which Steve Martin exhibited Tag at this event were extremely dangerous and posed a demonstrable risk to the public, in violation of Cal. Code Regs. tit. 14, § 671.2(a)(10). PETA urges the CDFW to revoke Steve Martin’s restricted species permit pursuant to Section 671.1(c)(6), and to assess the maximum penalty pursuant to Cal. Fish & Game Code § 2125(a).

I would welcome the opportunity to discuss this matter with you at your earliest convenience and look forward to hearing from you.

Very truly yours,



Michelle Sinnott, Esq.  
Associate Director, Captive Animal Law Enforcement

[REDACTED]