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2 March 2018

Dissertation Fieldwork Grants
Graduate School
University of Massachusetts, Amherst

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to offer my very strongest recommendation for **Tanya M. Lama** for a Dissertation Fieldwork Grant. I serve as Tanya's major advisor for her PhD program. Tanya is in excellent academic standing, having completed all of her coursework and successfully passed her written and oral comprehensive exams. She is an excellent student – certainly one of the best I have worked with at the PhD level for the past several years.

Tanya is conducting what I believe is really ground breaking research in conservation genetics. Her research is focused on the conservation genetics of Canada lynx, a widely distributed felid species in northern North America, but one whose populations may be in peril where it resides in the northern United States. As Tanya aptly writes in her proposal: "Management of lynx populations has traditionally been informed by genetic analyses using a small number of neutral markers. However, the complexities of managing this species demand more efficient tools and high-resolution data. We have produced the first reference genome for Canada lynx – an advancement in conservation science that allows genetic variation to be characterized across thousands of genes." As such, she is not only making great strides toward a deeper understanding of the genetic relationships, demography, and landscape use of this fascinating and important apex predator of the boreal forest, but she is also helping to lay a foundation for a broader application of conservation genetics as it relates to a host of other wildlife species. For many reasons, her research addresses one of the most important and timely topics in the field of conservation biology, and as such this work has great merit and importance.

In addition to the importance of Tanya's work, perhaps one of the things that impresses me the most is her dedication, drive, and ability to successfully complete this project. Her accumulation of the scientific and technical aspects of conservation genetics has been very, very impressive. She is working off a rather large grant from the State of Maine and is collaborating with some of the leaders in the field; Tanya has no trouble conversing with them, working side by side, and is already contributing as a full-fledged colleague. I have no doubt that she has amassed the skills and has the determination to see this research through to its successful end.

Although her project is well funded, the additional aspect that she would like to pursue as stated in her application is outside of the contract with the State of Maine. However, being able to analyze samples from the other lynx conservation units in the continental U. S. (Minnesota, Montana/Idaho, Washington, Greater Yellowstone Area, Colorado), as requested in this application, would greatly increase the scope and enhance the value of her research.

Thank you for considering Tanya Lama for a University of Massachusetts-Amherst Dissertation Fieldwork grant.

Sincerely,

/s/ *Stephen DeStefano*

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