



Grass Roots North Carolina

Post Office Box 10665, Raleigh, NC 27605

Ph: 877.282.0939

Fax: 919.573.0354

www.GRNC.org

February 3, 2014

The Honorable Pat McCrory
Governor of North Carolina
20301 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699-0301

Dear Governor McCrory:

In October, Sgt. Chad Arnold, an officer with the Special Investigations Unit of the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission (NCWRC), and the commission itself were reportedly honored at the annual Governor's Conservation Achievement Awards banquet. As you may have heard, however, it appears the awards might have been premature.

In recent days, more than three hundred fifty citizens of western North Carolina and several legislators convened near Bryson City to recount abuses by both the United States Forest Service (USFS) and the NCWRC during a four-year, \$2 million undercover operation they called "Something Bruin."

Although Something Bruin ostensibly targeted bear poaching rings, these citizens describe a series of travesties perpetrated by Agent Arnold, Georgia Agent Davey Webb and others which included entrapment, killing of bears by the agents themselves and, worst of all, storm trooper tactics which traumatized wives and children.

In particular, Ms. Linda Crisp and her daughter Michelle describe having their homes invaded and family heirlooms seized by agents wearing body armor and carrying fully automatic weapons. Worse, parents were detained outside their home while small children inside were left screaming and unattended.

Although eighty-one hunters were arrested for allegedly bear poaching, few if any have been convicted. State charges against most were reportedly dismissed, with only some later rearrested on federal charges by USFS.

Said *The Smoky Mountain News*: "...wildlife agents went on a fishing expedition, using entrapment and other underhanded tactics to trick hunters into violating wildlife rules, according to dozens of hunters who have come forward to protest the undercover operation."

The article goes on to report specific examples of malfeasance by wildlife agents, including entrapping hunters into crimes such as bear baiting, nighttime hunting and selling organs -- crimes they otherwise had no intention of committing. Meanwhile, many of the crimes cited were reportedly perpetrated by the agents themselves, including the killing of six out of ten bears.

In a courageous move to protect his constituents, Congressman Mark Meadows recently sent the enclosed letter to Deputy Inspector General Mary Kendall of the U.S. Department of the Interior and Inspector General Phyllis Fong of the U.S. Department of Agriculture calling for an investigation into Operation Something Bruin.

Any federal investigation produced by Congressman Meadows' efforts, however, will not focus on the roll of state-level operatives deployed by the NCWRC. Accordingly, I am asking you to call for an investigation into these travesties of justice by the Attorney General of North Carolina.

Nor should such investigation be limited to the policies and procedures employed in Something Bruin. If it can be proven that USFS or NCWRC agents committed wildlife violations or illegally entrapped hunters, the citizens victimized by their actions deserve to see appropriate criminal charges filed.

I am certain you do not wish to see the lawful citizens of North Carolina subjected to abuses by any law enforcement operation run amok. Therefore, I look forward to your public statement calling for investigation of Something Bruin by the North Carolina Department of Justice.

If I can answer questions or be of help in any way, please contact me at President@GRNC.org or (704) 907-9206.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'F. Paul Valone', written in a cursive style.

F. Paul Valone
President, Grass Roots North Carolina
Executive Director, Rights Watch International