

Form Name:
Submission Time:

July/August 2020 RAC & Board Feedback Form
July 15, 2020 3:14 pm

After viewing the 2020–21 bobcat and furbearer proposals by Darren Debloois: I am neutral on the proposals

After viewing the 2020–21 cougar recommendations by Darren Debloois: I support the proposals

Do you have any additional comments about the recommendations? Way too many cougars on mt Dutton, saw 3 last year bow hunt, had multiple on trail cams, already have one this year on my camera. Oh and the deer numbers are way down, ask everybody who hunts deer on mt Dutton. I am dedicated hunter and very disappointed. Been on the mountain 9 times this year scouting. 27 times last year scouting/ hunting.

Form Name:
Submission Time:

July/August 2020 RAC & Board Feedback Form
July 17, 2020 5:12 pm

**After viewing the 2020–21 bobcat and
furbearer proposals by Darren Deblois:** I am neutral on the proposals

**After viewing the 2020–21 cougar
recommendations by Darren Deblois:** I oppose the proposals

Do you have any additional comments about the recommendations?

I do not like the split units. Never have, I would rather see these as strictly quota hunts. One problem is that the hunters that draw the limited entry tag typically sit on the weather for the most optimal times and do not get in a hurry to harvest and squander days that could have been productive. Then when they do not harvest and it changes to a quota there are far fewer if any days with good snow to pursue and harvest the remaining quota.

I do not like the statewide female harvest quota. You are asking hunters to do a lot by identifying 100% if it is a Tom in that tree. Even the most experienced lion hunters out there get fooled sometimes. Those units that you are recommending tag reductions are 2 units with a pile of lions. I'm sure most hunters are so sick of chasing lions all over the Dutton that when one finally goes up a tree they could care less if that thing is male, female, or non-binary. We should leave it up to the hunters discretion and not penalize the local deer population for hunters not caring if they harvest a "trophy tom".

Spot and stalk cougar hunting is like putting lipstick on a pig. It dresses the situation up a bit but anyone that has spent any amount of time in the woods or paid attention to states like Oregon realize that this not an effective method to take lions off the landscape. If you are going to have an extended season then let the hunter use dogs if they wish to. If they wish to spot and stalk then they can but lets not pretend that a 5 month spot and stalk season is for anything other than show. I do like the price point at \$30.

I do like the seasonal take limits bumping up to 2 lions. These hunters that are capable of harvesting lions should be allowed to.

If you were to keep limited entry and harvest quota split dates I would really like to see that limited entry period end by Jan 31 and allow better conditions for those lions to be harvested by more aggressive hunters that are willing to hunt harder.

I definitely don't agree with the lion hunting restrictions for seasonal dog use. The Elk Ridge unit is among one of the worst units for deer population right now.

It might be a good idea to not make these season dates and harvest areas so complicated either. It is a bit complicated trying to figure out which units I can hunt spot and stalk from August to December or if that unit is a 365 season with the use of dogs, or if I can use dogs even though it is unit under the predator management plan but has season restrictions were I cant use dogs. It just seems like it could be simplified a little more than this.

I am glad we are taking steps to address the growing lion population but I think we can make it easier for these lions to be harvested on the landscapes were they are having an impact.

After viewing the 2020–21 bobcat and furbearer proposals by Darren Debloois: I oppose the proposals

Do you have any additional comments about these proposals? THEY ARE OVER REACHING AND WILL END UP HARMING THE NATURAL BALANCE OF THE ENVIRONMENTS THEY TARGETING IN AREAS THAT ARE ALREADY UNDER THE STRAIN OF GLOBAL WARMING

After viewing the 2020–21 cougar recommendations by Darren Debloois: I oppose the proposals

Do you have any additional comments about the recommendations? THEY ARE OVER REACHING AND WILL END UP HARMING THE NATURAL BALANCE OF THE ENVIRONMENTS THEY TARGETING IN AREAS THAT ARE ALREADY UNDER THE STRAIN OF GLOBAL WARMING

After viewing the 2020–21 Beaver WMA Habitat Management Plan by Gary Bezzant, do you have any comments? THEY ARE OVER REACHING AND WILL END UP HARMING THE NATURAL BALANCE OF THE ENVIRONMENTS THEY TARGETING IN AREAS THAT ARE ALREADY UNDER THE STRAIN OF GLOBAL WARMING

Form Name:
Submission Time:

July/August 2020 RAC & Board Feedback Form
July 19, 2020 4:45 pm

After viewing the 2020–21 bobcat and furbearer proposals by Darren Deblois: I support the proposals

Do you have any additional comments about these proposals? Trapping bobcats or any animal is inhuman and not sportsman like

After viewing the 2020–21 cougar recommendations by Darren Deblois: I oppose the proposals

Do you have any additional comments about the recommendations? Hunting cougers is find. They are a top predator and shouldn't be hunted

Form Name:
Submission Time:

July/August 2020 RAC & Board Feedback Form
July 20, 2020 11:41 pm

**After viewing the 2020–21 bobcat and
furbearer proposals by Darren Deblois:** I support the proposals

**After viewing the 2020–21 cougar
recommendations by Darren Deblois:** I oppose the proposals

After viewing the 2020–21 bobcat and furbearer proposals by Darren Debloois: I am neutral on the proposals

After viewing the 2020–21 cougar recommendations by Darren Debloois: I am neutral on the proposals

Do you have any additional comments about the recommendations? As a land owner on Kanarra mountain in the upper and lower basins we have seen a severe decrease in the deer and the elk population. (I feel there are two factors affecting these populations, 1-the cow elk in our area get killed in the winter as they come down to get out of the snow. Too many cow tags...The unit needs to be split and managed on a smaller level. 2- Deer are being killed by cougars and livestock protection dogs, when they have their fawns in the spring.)

We run sheep on all of our property and have seen a number of cougar kills over the last three years. Limiting the number of permits in our area creates a concern for us as the permits have all been filled it leaves us in a very hard spot to manage our livestock without experiencing kills.

Form Name:
Submission Time:

July/August 2020 RAC & Board Feedback Form
July 21, 2020 1:37 pm

After viewing the 2020–21 bobcat and furbearer proposals by Darren Deblois: I support the proposals

After viewing the 2020–21 cougar recommendations by Darren Deblois: I oppose the proposals

Do you have any additional comments about the recommendations?

Dear RAC members,

My name is Cory Huntsman, I am writing this letter on behalf of the Utah Houndsmen Association. We understand the urgent need to work together towards a win/win solution in order to help the recovery of our states suffering deer herds. As houndsmen we recognize that predator populations lag that of their prey and currently the deer numbers have dramatically reduced while lion numbers have remained somewhat consistent. A reduction in these predator numbers will assist in a quicker deer recovery which will translate into healthy lion populations. While the majority of our members are deer hunters too we as well desire to have healthy herd numbers and understand a balance between the predator/prey relationship is required in order to have the best experience in both deer and lion hunting opportunities. With that being said, the UHA supports the overall Division's cougar proposal with a few suggestions that may assist in achieving the goal of reducing lion populations in focused areas quicker. This will aid in a faster recovery of deer population while maintaining the overall respect that this majestic animal deserves. Our membership look forward to the day in which the deer herds return and the focus switches from recovering these herds to recovering lion populations. It is recognized that significant increases in lion harvests could not be accomplished with out the utilization of the skills our membership possess. These suggestions include:

Not supporting the suggestion of multiple lion tags per hunter and reasoning behind this recommendation.

Suggestions on how to focus the hound hunter into the specific area that are in need of immediate lion population reductions.

Maintaining minimal but specific areas for trophy purposes. Very similar to sheep units. This will give the public the opportunity to draw a trophy permit which will maintain the legitimacy of the bonus points system by providing the potential of trophy experiences within the State of Utah.

We do not support the two lion per hunter rule change. While it is doubtful that this population control method will yield a significant increase to the lion harvests numbers, we do believe it will portray a negative perception about the majestic species. It potentially portrays this animal as a vermin to be tossed aside and not to be respected as a managed big game species. It also promotes an increased opportunity for unethical killing of a protected game animal managed by the state DWR. The demand for cougar hunts by legitimate sportsmen is high enough the harvest objectives can be met, if the populations lions exist, by targeting the trophy hunter that will actually use the carcass for a trophy mount and/or process the meat we will maintain the integrity and respect for the species. We do not feel at this point it is necessary to promote wasting Utah game animals by allowing people to kill two cats per year. We can still easily reach our desired quotas without diminishing an ethical hunt.

The next discussion topic is more of a suggestion for the division, board and RAC's to consider more than opposition to a recommendation. There

are 27 units that are either in the Deer or Sheep Predator Management plan this year. If our top concern is getting the cougar numbers in check on our Mule Deer Predator Management units then it seems imperative that we strategically create increased opportunities for these units over other units. One easy way to ensure a strategic plan to assist these units is to take our 8 Harvest Objective units not in a predator management program & convert them into Split Units. The split units do not open to Harvest Objective until February 27th. This strategy would encourage and create opportunity for outfitters and hound hunters to hunt open unlimited units that are in the Mule Deer Predator Management Plan and in need of additional harvest for the first four months of the season (November-February 22).

The last proposal that we oppose is eliminating all of our Limited Entry cougar units. Utah has always had four LE cougar units, this year the Division is recommending eliminating them all. Due to devastating low deer numbers on two of those units we do agree with removing a couple. However, cougars are still considered a trophy game animal and sportsmen have accumulated upwards of 18 preference points. From our understanding, the main reasons for eliminating the LE units is due to the season dates of the associated conservation and draw permits. If left in a LE unit The Divisions concerns are if the winter deer counts came in alarmingly low, they would not have the ability to do mid year emergency tag increase. We feel one simple solution to this would be to put a disclaimer in the Guide Book and/or Permit that states in the event of winter deer counts coming in below the desired threshold, this unit is subject to a mid year emergency tag increase and open to harvest objective beginning February 27th (or whatever the date is for the split season opener for that current year). The two units that we would like to see remain as LE units are Wasatch Strawberry and Oquirrh/Stansbury East. We feel the same amount of cats will be killed on both units, but will give sportsmen a more quality hunt, which they should have with 18 preference points or a \$6000 Conservation permit.

Thank you for your consideration and thank you for your service on the RAC,
Cory Huntsman
Utah Houndsmen Association - President
801-875-5367

After viewing the 2020–21 bobcat and furbearer proposals by Darren Deblois: I oppose the proposals

Do you have any additional comments about these proposals? The UWGA does not want to see bobcat permit numbers decreased or the season length shortened.

After viewing the 2020–21 cougar recommendations by Darren Deblois: I support the proposals

Do you have any additional comments about the recommendations? The Utah Wool Growers Association is supporting the DWR's recommendations for increasing cougar tags and implementing 27 additional permits in hunting units that aren't implementing predator management plans. The UWGA would fully support a statewide unlimited quota. Our producers spend 365 days a year on the range observing nature and what we have seen is the rapid increase in predators, especially cougars, and the decline of the deer population. We find that wildlife and agriculture mirror each other. When the sheep move on, the deer experience heavy predation. Frankly, it is our opinion that there should be unlimited tags and unlimited quota until we get the predators in check. The UWGA also supports the DWR recommendation to increase the harvest limit from one to two cougars between July 1 and June 30, 2021.

Form Name:
Submission Time:

July/August 2020 RAC & Board Feedback Form
July 21, 2020 2:27 pm

After viewing the 2020–21 bobcat and furbearer proposals by Darren Debloois: I support the proposals

After viewing the 2020–21 cougar recommendations by Darren Debloois: I support the proposals

Do you have any additional comments about the recommendations? We here at Mule Deer Foundation, UT fully support the Divisions proposal on cougar recommendations.
Jeremy Anderson, Regional Director MDF, UT

Form Name:
Submission Time:

July/August 2020 RAC & Board Feedback Form
July 21, 2020 2:36 pm

After viewing the 2020–21 bobcat and furbearer proposals by Darren Debloois: I support the proposals

After viewing the 2020–21 cougar recommendations by Darren Debloois: I support the proposals

Do you have any additional comments about the recommendations? I strongly back the proposals as presented by the UDWR ! Lion numbers on my trail cameras have exploded over the last 5 years. As well as many of my constituents that have expressed the same concern ! Also Utahs migration Initiative shows an alarming percentage of collared deer mortality rates are caused by lions
Thanks
DW

Form Name:
Submission Time:

July/August 2020 RAC & Board Feedback Form
July 21, 2020 7:13 pm

**After viewing the 2020–21 bobcat and
furbearer proposals by Darren Deblois:** I oppose the proposals

**After viewing the 2020–21 cougar
recommendations by Darren Deblois:** I oppose the proposals

Form Name:
Submission Time:

July/August 2020 RAC & Board Feedback Form
July 21, 2020 7:45 pm

After viewing the 2020–21 bobcat and furbearer proposals by Darren Deblois: I support the proposals

Do you have any additional comments about these proposals?

After viewing the 2020–21 cougar recommendations by Darren Deblois: I support the proposals

Form Name:
Submission Time:

July/August 2020 RAC & Board Feedback Form
July 21, 2020 8:01 pm

**After viewing the 2020–21 bobcat and
furbearer proposals by Darren Debloois:** I am neutral on the proposals

**After viewing the 2020–21 cougar
recommendations by Darren Debloois:** I oppose the proposals

**Do you have any additional comments
about the recommendations?** Two lions per hunter is unnecessary and over kill! I would like to see any
unit not under predator management go back to split units!

Form Name:
Submission Time:

July/August 2020 RAC & Board Feedback Form
July 21, 2020 8:05 pm

**After viewing the 2020–21 bobcat and
furbearer proposals by Darren Debloois:**

I am neutral on the proposals

**After viewing the 2020–21 cougar
recommendations by Darren Debloois:**

I oppose the proposals

**Do you have any additional comments
about the recommendations?**

Two lion per hunter is overkill.
I would like to see any unit not under predator management go back to a
split unit instead of being a harvest objective unit

After viewing the 2020–21 bobcat and furbearer proposals by Darren Debloois:

I am neutral on the proposals

After viewing the 2020–21 cougar recommendations by Darren Debloois:

I oppose the proposals

Do you have any additional comments about the recommendations?

This recommendation is irresponsible and unacceptable! This proposal will result in a species eradication in much of the state and focuses on the Southern Region. This proposal is not in line with the original cougar management plan and appears to be purely a political move as a result of HB125. Unlimited quota units and multiple tags per person will result in legalized wanton destruction of protected wildlife!

I oppose 2 tags per hunter!

I recommend all harvest objective units, be split units!

I adamantly oppose the elimination of limited entry units!

After viewing the 2020–21 Beaver WMA Habitat Management Plan by Gary Bezzant, do you have any comments?

HB 125 appears to have been bought and paid for by Special Interest Groups such as SFW. Because of money it appears the special interest groups with deep pockets control the DWR. It is no coincidence radical management plans follow political house bills with respect to wildlife such as HB125. I do not support anymore partnering with SFW or any special interest groups. It is evident biology is based off politics which is based off money!

After viewing the 2020–21 bobcat and furbearer proposals by Darren Debloois: I am neutral on the proposals

After viewing the 2020–21 cougar recommendations by Darren Debloois: I oppose the proposals

Do you have any additional comments about the recommendations?

I don't agree with the the tag increase and making specifically the boulder and the Manti unlimited I know it's not something that we can fight and you guys are going to listen but that is not going to help the deer number. The lions are a small percentage of the deer population recovering. 2 lions tags i am strongly against. Nobody needs 2 lions they are a trophy animal. The people killing 2 lions will be waisting them
Because they hate lions.

I don't hate the fact of the lions season closing early on the 3 premium bear units for Non residents, But I do say we leave it open for residents. The reason that comes up
Is to Keep non residents from pursuing bears with a lion tag. Don't punish the residents because of a non resident issue. I oppose the tag increases. You guys increased them so much mid season last year. We don't even know how bad the negative effect will be on lions. To some of us lions are part of our livelihood and we would like to see a healthy population.

Form Name:
Submission Time:

July/August 2020 RAC & Board Feedback Form
July 22, 2020 9:00 am

After viewing the 2020–21 bobcat and furbearer proposals by Darren Deblois: I oppose the proposals

After viewing the 2020–21 cougar recommendations by Darren Deblois: I oppose the proposals

Do you have any additional comments about the recommendations?

I am a graduate student at Utah State University studying Wildlife Management and Ecology. I care deeply about the sustainability and health of Utah's wildlife populations and ecosystems, and I am writing today to express my opposition to the proposed cougar 2020-2021 cougar recommendations. Due to Utah Code 23-16-10, the predator management policies newly enacted on many cougar hunt units are out of line with the previously established Cougar Management Plan, now allowing for increased and unlimited cougar harvest from these units. However, the aforementioned Cougar Management Plan directs for decreased or maintained harvest quotas in many of these targeted units, following the two well-established management targets (<40% females in the harvest and >15% of >5yrs in the harvest.) The impacts of this increased and aggressive harvest will likely be damaging to cougar populations statewide, and may have unexpected population repercussions, especially in units where the PMPs are in direct conflict with the previous CMP targets. Attempting to quickly and drastically reduce cougar densities not only impacts the health of the population, it also reduces the opportunity for future sustainable and judicious hunting opportunities for the public. 1) Therefore, I oppose the proposal to Utah Administrative Rule R657-10 to change the season bag limit from one cougar per person to two cougars per person. This change would encourage increased pursuit and harvest in many units which are already heavily hunted, such as the Book Cliffs, Cache, Central Mountains (both Nebo and Northwest), Nine Mile, and Ogden units. These units will already be directly impacted by the new unlimited harvest allowance of the predator management policy. These, and many other units, have often met or exceeded their harvest objective goals in prior years. Thus, increasing the per-person limit to two cougars is an unnecessary and inappropriate method to achieve cougar management goals. In combination with the drastic changes already set in place by the new Predator Management Policy, increasing the season bag limit to 2 cougars per person will negatively impact social structure and stability of local populations that already experience heavy hunting and pursuit pressure. Instead of reducing cougar density as intended, heavy hunting pressure has been shown in previous studies to increase cougar immigration and recruitment in the local populations, shift population structure to younger animals (which are more likely to cause human-wildlife conflict), and allow for higher densities of individuals with smaller home ranges, thus completely failing to obtain the goal of reducing overall cougar densities (Robinson et al. 2008). Additionally, UDWR currently lacks sufficient data on any of these hunt units to support the claim that cougar populations are limiting deer abundance, and thus lacks the proper motivation to support these aggressive measures to reduce cougar density. Until UDWR has collected sufficient data to determine cougar demographic parameters and source-sink patterns in local populations, aggressive harvest is unwarranted and will likely trigger unexpected consequences to population structure and stability. Thus, the two-cougar bag limit should be rejected.2) As a Wildlife and Ecology graduate student at USU, I understand the importance of capturing and maintaining a viable sample of study individuals from which to collect data to address research objectives.

I am aware of the ongoing Utah Cougar Study being conducted by USU, UDWR, and USDA, which involves collaring and monitoring mountain lions across the state. Regarding R657-10-23 subsection 4, I request that the taking of GPS- or radio-collared cougars from any unit currently in the USU-UDWR Cougar Ecology study be prohibited by law and be prosecutable as a wildlife violation. As a graduate student myself, I understand firsthand the time, cost, and energy involved in capturing animals and collecting sufficient research data, and I believe that UDWR's failure to protect these study animals from harvest during the ongoing capture effort is a waste of time and public resources. If the UDWR is devoting state funding to support a large-scale research study for any managed game species, it should mandate that the animals involved in said study will be protected from take while the capture and monitoring efforts are ongoing. Thus, I encourage this RAC to change the wording in subsection 4 of R657-10-23 to prohibit by law the take of any GPS- or radio-collared cougar in the following cougar units: Cache; Ogden; Morgan-South Rich; Central Mountains-Northwest, Northeast, Southwest, and Southeast; Book Cliffs, East; and Book Cliffs, Rattlesnake Canyon/Nine Mile, South. This change is necessary to ensure that sufficient high-quality data can be collected for addressing the research goals that UDWR and USU have agreed upon.3) I oppose the removal of the wording "or any cougar accompanied by an adult" from subsection 3 of R657-10-23. I propose that the wording be instead changed to "or any kitten or subadult cougar accompanied by an adult". This subsection of the cougar harvest rule is intended to protect both adult females with dependent young and dependent young themselves from harvest. However, with this line removed, the rule would only protect young kittens with spots and adult females with spotted young. Thus, it would fail to protect larger kittens, between 6-12 months, which are still dependent on their mother for food but have already lost their markings. In the Cougar Guidebook, UDWR defines a kitten as "a cougar less than one year of age, or a cougar accompanied by an adult." Therefore, this line should be modified and retained within the written rule to extend the protection to "large" kittens between 6-12 months of age, which are still wholly dependent on their mother. Cougar age identification between juveniles and adults can easily be incorporated into the provided Cougar Orientation Course so hunters can confidently determine if a treed cougar is a kitten and thus protected from harvest.4) Finally, I am pleased and proud to live in a state with amazing natural resources and a historically powerful conservation ethic. Like many people in Utah, my family has lived in the West for generations. I do not oppose hunting on principle; I support responsible harvest, ethical sportsmanship, and science-based wildlife management. I am disappointed to see those things I value are not represented in the new predator management policy. Thank you for considering these requests and comments during future relevant RAC and Wildlife Board meetings.

Form Name:
Submission Time:

July/August 2020 RAC & Board Feedback Form
July 22, 2020 2:32 pm

**After viewing the 2020–21 bobcat and
furbearer proposals by Darren Deblois:** I support the proposals

**After viewing the 2020–21 cougar
recommendations by Darren Deblois:** I support the proposals

**Do you have any additional comments
about the recommendations?** The Division has done an amazing job with these Recommendations!

After viewing the 2020–21 bobcat and furbearer proposals by Darren Debloois:

I support the proposals

Do you have any additional comments about these proposals?

In general, I support the proposals. However, I would like to see overall bobcat quotas significantly reduced.

After viewing the 2020–21 cougar recommendations by Darren Debloois:

I oppose the proposals

Do you have any additional comments about the recommendations?

As a Utah resident and wildlife stakeholder, I am vehemently opposed by the proposals put forth by the Division. They are reminiscent of the days when there was a bounty on our cougars and they were treated as vermin. This is not ethical hunting, nor is it supported by science.

I am asking that the RAC members oppose specifically the increase of 27 permits in non-predator management plan units. I would also like hunter allowance to be restricted to one cougar per hunter rather than the two cat per hunter limit recommended by the DWR. I also ask that predator management plan units have quotas rather than being unlimited. Lastly, I would like to support Mr. Debloois' request that hunters not be permitted to kill collared cougars.

I would like to note that both the current and recommended quotas, while in line with Utah's Cougar Management Plan, are not supported by current research and science and often fail to achieve the desired management outcomes. For example, current research is finding that overhunting cougars, as we are doing in Utah, will likely lead to an increase in conflicts with cougars, people, and domestic animals. Additionally, current research does not support killing cougars to boost game species like mule deer. Instead, it is finding that overhunting may likely be having the opposite effect, instead harming our deer numbers.

Last but not least, Utah residents have been telling the DWR for years that they do not want to see quotas increased. It's time to listen to the desires of the public.

Thank you.

Form Name:
Submission Time:

July/August 2020 RAC & Board Feedback Form
July 22, 2020 8:58 pm

**After viewing the 2020–21 bobcat and
furbearer proposals by Darren Deblois:**

I am neutral on the proposals

**After viewing the 2020–21 cougar
recommendations by Darren Deblois:**

I oppose the proposals

**Do you have any additional comments
about the recommendations?**

There is no biology to these proposals. The biologists themselves have said this is NOT their recommendation. Unlimited tags on the Pahvant/Fillmore unit. Will result in total anihilation of the lion. But that's what the politics want. No biology here.

After viewing the 2020–21 bobcat and furbearer proposals by Darren Debloois:

I am neutral on the proposals

After viewing the 2020–21 cougar recommendations by Darren Debloois:

I oppose the proposals

Do you have any additional comments about the recommendations?

you are way light on the proposals for the boulder plateau. i have been going to the boulder for 44 straight years and this is by far the worse deer population i have ever seen. not only do you need to increase the cougar tags but you need some other very drastic measures to ever effect the herds on the boulder. close it down for 3 years, then go to a 3pt or better for 2 years and then you may see an increase in the deer herds. elk numbers are fine for the present but deer need help. you may lose money revenue but drastic measures are the only way to increase herds.having hunts from august to the end of december has also taken a big toll. too many hunts and too long. deer should be 2 weeks for bow, 7 days for muzzle loader and 5 days for rifle. cut out the special hunts for now. i promise you this is the only way you will ever increase the deer numbers on our struggling units , the boulder, the beaver, pavaunt,fish lake and monroe. sincerely. dean aston

Form Name:
Submission Time:

July/August 2020 RAC & Board Feedback Form
July 24, 2020 12:07 pm

After viewing the 2020–21 bobcat and furbearer proposals by Darren Deblois: I support the proposals

After viewing the 2020–21 cougar recommendations by Darren Deblois: I oppose the proposals

Do you have any additional comments about the recommendations?

Dear Chairman Richmond and Regional Advisory Council members,

The Mountain Lion Foundation provides the following comments on cougar hunting in Utah for the 2020-21 season. We represent over 8,000 supporters nationwide.

The Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (DWR)'s cougar hunting recommendations for the 2020-21 season are overly aggressive and not based on scientific fact or reason. We urge you to advise the Utah Wildlife Board to suspend or significantly reduce the hunting of cougars, especially females, in Utah.

- Hunting cougars does not lead to management objectives of increasing deer and elk numbers.
- Female cougars contribute disproportionately to the population and should not be hunted.
- Cougar hunting season should be delayed to December 1st to reduce kitten mortality.
- No credible scientific evidence supports the notion that the indiscriminate killing of cougars serves any genuine interest in managing the species and likely leads to increased conflicts with humans and livestock.

I. Hunting cougars does not lead to management objectives of increasing deer and elk numbers.

Hunting cougars has long been thought to bolster populations of game species like deer, while reducing competition for this shared resource. However, recent studies that evaluated the impacts that heavy hunting of cougars has on deer and elk found that hunting cougars does not increase deer populations. In many cases, the hunting activity of cougars is actually beneficial to prey animal populations, like deer and elk. Cougars often prey on sick or weak animals because they require less energy expenditure to capture. This helps to remove diseased animals and weaker genes from the breeding population.

One study, published in February of this year, looked at cougar effects on deer populations using data from California, where cougar hunting has been prohibited since 1972, as a control and compared this data to cougar data from other state and federal agencies where cougar hunting is permitted. They tested the hypothesis that sport hunting of cougars should reduce cougar populations and result in an increase in deer and elk population numbers. The study found no evidence to support the hypothesis with deer densities, and fluctuations thereof, being similar between California and states where cougar hunting is permitted.

Another study, conducted in Yellowstone National Park, found that heavy hunting pressure on cougars had the opposite effect on mule deer populations. As trophy hunters often target the large, dominant male, they inadvertently reduce the age structure of cougar populations leaving younger, less experienced cougars on the landscape. The study found that

these younger predators typically selected for mule deer instead of larger prey species like elk. As a result, the researchers noted that, despite increased survival of fawns and females, the removal of cougars did not yield a growth in the mule deer population. Instead, they suggested that hunting cougars may actually be increasing the number of cougars that target deer.

On the East Coast of the United States, it has become clear that when cougars are extirpated, deer populations do increase. However, it is not true that simply decreasing the number of cougars will cause deer populations to increase or remain healthy over the long term. Cougars and deer have co-evolved to create a natural balance. Availability of suitable habitat, connectivity, and changes in climate (e.g. harsh winters) will continue to determine deer numbers and lion numbers will fluctuate in response, unless cougars are nearly extirpated. In other words, an agency cannot adjust prey numbers by reducing predators without risking extirpation of the predator population.

We urge you to advise the Utah Wildlife Board that a reduction in deer numbers is likely a proximate cause of the harsh winter and not due to increased cougar predation. Advise the Board not to implement predator management plans, which persecute cougars. Hunting cougars year-round under the guise of a "predator management plan" is unsustainable and unethical. We also ask you to urge DWR Director Fowlks to repeal the spot-and-stalk hunt he approved for this year from August 1, 2020 - December 31, 2020.

II. Female Cougars contribute disproportionately to the population and should not be hunted.

Cougars are a long-lived, k-selected species in which females contribute disproportionately to the population. Female mortality can have disproportionate negative influences on population stability and growth. If too many females are removed from a population, the population can become unstable and collapse. Removing more than 20% of adult females (natural mortality and hunter harvest) from any given population is likely to lead to population instability. Therefore, total hunter harvest of adult females should not exceed 15-20% to account for natural mortality. The Utah Cougar Management Plan V.3 2015-2025 aims for a female harvest of 40% of the estimated population. This is not sustainable and does not account for natural mortality. If female harvest continues at this rate, there could be devastating effects to Utah's cougar populations. Female harvest should not exceed 15-20% of the estimated population size.

We urge you to advise the Utah Wildlife Board to amend the current cougar management plan and stop female harvest or to reduce the number to 15-20% of the estimated population.

III. All cougar hunting seasons should be delayed to December 1st to

reduce kitten mortality.

Cougar kitten survival rates are low by nature. Hunting of cougars only leads to an increase in kitten mortality in heavily hunted populations. Killing an adult female with kittens or cubs results in the death of her dependent young by dehydration, malnutrition, predation and exposure; even those who are at least six months to a year old. Removing too many adult females can impact a population's ability to recruit new members making the population less resilient to hunting and other human- and natural-caused mortality.

While it is not permitted in Utah to kill any females accompanied by spotted kittens, dependent young, especially during the denning period, are not always in the presence of their mother. Without kittens in her presence, a hunter may not be aware that a female has offspring and may kill her. As cougar kittens are dependent on their mothers for survival up to 18 months of age, the loss of their mother prior to reaching adulthood would likely result in the death of her young, even if they are around a year old.

A recent study showed that delaying the start of hunting seasons until December 1st could protect up to 91% of kittens from dying as a result of being orphaned by hunters. By better aligning any hunting seasons with denning periods, hunters will have the best opportunity to identify females with dependent young and reduce the likelihood of orphaning kittens.

We ask you to advise the Utah Wildlife Board to delay any hunting season to December 1st of each year.

IV. Hunting cougars is an ineffective management strategy because populations are self-regulating.

Except in rare instances, cougar populations do not require management to control growth because their populations are self-regulating. This is driven by cougar social structure, territoriality, the abundance of prey, and the carrying capacity of the land to support those populations. Human encroachment on wild land leads to habitat loss and reduced connectivity, resulting in a lower carrying capacity for predator and prey species.

Cougars occur at low densities relative to their primary prey. Like most large carnivores, they maintain large territories to defend resources necessary for survival and reproduction, such as access to food, water, shelter and mates. Therefore, when prey populations and suitable habitat decline, so do cougar populations. Because of these predator-prey and population dynamics, cougar populations do not need to be managed by humans and should not be hunted for sport.

Even though it is an ineffective management tool, hunting is unfortunately still the greatest source of mortality for cougars throughout the majority of their range in the United States. Hunting cougars results in additive

mortality - rates that far exceed what would happen in nature - and can lead to population instability and decline.⁵

In order to sustain viable populations of cougars, prevent human-wildlife conflict, and avoid compromising the long-term viability of cougar populations by failing to account for all human-caused sources of mortality, hunting of adult lion populations should not exceed the intrinsic growth rate of the population of interest.

The intrinsic growth rate for cougar populations is established by researchers to be between 15-17%. Assuring that human-caused mortality is limited to well below this threshold facilitates the maintenance of home ranges and social stability, reducing the likelihood of increased conflict with humans and population decline.

Any quota established by DWR must not exceed the widely accepted sustainable threshold of 12-14% for total anthropogenic loss within a population.

Based on the information in this letter, the Mountain Lion Foundation respectfully insists that the Central Region RAC members consider the following concerns and urge the Utah Wildlife Board to make the changes below:

- Repeal the spot-and-stalk hunt (August 1, 2020 - December 31, 2020) implemented by Director Fowlks.
- Stop current predator management plans throughout the state as these will not achieve the management objective of increasing deer population numbers.
- Stop female harvest or reduce female harvest to 15-20% of the estimated population size and retire the current 40% objective which is unsustainable.
- Delay the start of all cougar hunting seasons in all areas until December 1st each year to protect dependent kittens from being orphaned by hunters.
- Require that any quota established by the Utah Wildlife Board not exceed 12-14% for total anthropogenic loss within a population, based on the current population estimate.

Thank you for your consideration. Please make this comment letter a part of the official record regarding this decision.

Respectfully,

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After viewing the 2020–21 bobcat and furbearer proposals by Darren Deblois:

I oppose the proposals

Do you have any additional comments about these proposals?

Why are bobcats being "managed" at all? They are an important part of a balanced ecosystem and should be left alone. Two excerpts from the Utah Bobcat Management Plan V2 say it all: "Many trappers trap bobcats just for the enjoyment of getting to experience the beauty of nature"..... and, "they learn to truly respect the bobcat and the bobcat's environment." What's wrong with enjoying the beauty of nature and respecting another species and its environment without killing it?

After viewing the 2020–21 cougar recommendations by Darren Deblois:

I oppose the proposals

Do you have any additional comments about the recommendations?

Although I am a novice in trying to understand the primary role of the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources, it appears that its foremost objective is to protect the interests of two groups, big game hunters and ranchers. The logic seems to be that if deer populations drop or a rancher loses a sheep or calf, then the blame automatically falls to the predator, which must then be "managed" through increased harvesting. Why is the killing of predators the # one fix when other factors such as lack of forage, habitat loss, disease, drought, etc., etc. most likely play a larger role? As a southern Utah resident, I would request that the members of the Regional Advisory Council do not approve this proposal.

After viewing the 2020–21 bobcat and furbearer proposals by Darren Debloois: I oppose the proposals

After viewing the 2020–21 cougar recommendations by Darren Debloois: I oppose the proposals

Do you have any additional comments about the recommendations? I have had the opportunity to be part of cougar research for close to 20 years I know the way we are going will not end up good in the long run, there is more to the survival of mule deer than killing all the lions, I found out on one of the research units we had the removal of elk brought back the deer numbers, hunting has changed so much now with all the new technology that nothing has a chance to make it, so as a houndsman and a sportsman I think the board needs to take a hard look at this because it is not the answer, thanks for your time and I appreciate the opportunity to voice my opinion Mclain Mecham

Form Name:
Submission Time:

July/August 2020 RAC & Board Feedback Form
July 30, 2020 7:09 am

After viewing the 2020–21 bobcat and furbearer proposals by Darren Debloois: I support the proposals

After viewing the 2020–21 cougar recommendations by Darren Debloois: I support the proposals

Do you have any additional comments about the recommendations? Scott Stubbs representing Stubbs Livestock. This summer I have had cougars working on both herds of my sheep. We need to reduce the number of cougars on the pangutch Lake unit. This has been the most problem I've had in 30 years. My Trapper said to me you can't blame the cougars there are no deer to take. I would encourage you to increase the cougar take to help them you're older population.

After viewing the 2020–21 bobcat and furbearer proposals by Darren Debloois:

I am neutral on the proposals

After viewing the 2020–21 cougar recommendations by Darren Debloois:

I oppose the proposals

Do you have any additional comments about the recommendations?

The UWGA does not support the prohibition of harvesting collared lions. We strongly believe that the status quo should be maintained that, while it is discouraged to harvest any collared wildlife, it should not be illegal, and we should stick with biologists recommendations against any restrictions. We understand that lions are collared to facilitate data collection in different studies statewide, and there is a cost associated with capturing and collaring the lions. However, we strongly believe that by limiting the harvest of collared lions it will skew the data about the lion population which in turn biases the study and has the potential to invalidate the findings. The data needs to reflect that some lions are taken by sportsmen, some are hit by cars, some are taken under depredation tags etc. It is systematically flawed to cherry pick data. Lions are hard to kill in the summer when they are primarily killing sheep. Those depredating lions are, more often than not, harvested in the winter long after the sheep have gone and they are now killing deer. That doesn't change their need for removal. A collar doesn't make a lion any more valuable and it would be wrong to exempt them from removal. Livestock producers desperately need sportsmen to facilitate these harvests.
