

Form Name:
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July/August 2021 RAC Feedback
July 14, 2021 8:26 pm

Which best describes your position regarding the 2021–22 cougar recommendations? Strongly agree

Do you have any additional comments about these recommendations?

There are to many cougars on the manti, keep hammering them. This is coming from someone that has 9 points and won't be using these points because the tags are over the counter. There are also to man mule deer being hit by road kill, please propose more high fences along highway 89.

That is all, thank you.

Which best describes your position regarding the 2021–22 cougar recommendations?

Strongly disagree

Do you have any additional comments about these recommendations?

The legislation passed in 2020 regarding predator control and predator management is in violation of the DWR mandate to maintain healthy cougar populations for the enjoyment of various user groups including non-hunters. As a non-hunter I demand that my feedback be taken into consideration in the management plan, as well as any other policy documents or proposed changes for the 2021-22 cougar harvest. Current management strategies and policies are heavily biased toward hunters and are not in compliance with the agency's mandate. The DWR is required to solicit and give weighty consideration to the feedback and interests of non-hunters and other groups advocating for cougar protection. As it currently stands, the DWR is almost exclusively serving the special interest of hunters, not the entire user group the DWR is mandated to serve. Predators such as cougars are under severely pressure at this time due to drought, wildfire, over-hunting and a limited prey base. Further protection for this wildlife species needs to be enacted, not further over-harvesting. Cougars cannot maintain any resemblance of a healthy genetically diverse population if the over-harvesting that took place last year, is maintained at the same level or increased as noted in the proposed changes. The DWR is responsible for managing for all Utahans and must not adopt or approve of these changes to policy. I strongly object to last year's legislation, as well as the actions of the Director to further reduce the already frighteningly low numbers of cougars in our state. Do not enact these heavily biased, illegal and grossly negligent changes in policy or management strategy. Revise your management plan to reflect a more balanced approach that more equitably represents the needs of non-hunters.

Which best describes your position regarding the 2021–22 furbearer recommendations? Strongly disagree

Do you have any additional comments about these recommendations?

I strongly disagree with the furbearer/ bobcat. I do not support the recommendation to remove the permit cap for bobcats as this opens the door for potential overharvest. I would also recommend that the number of bobcat permits be reduced to 2.

I also recommend that out-of-state trappers be required to purchase a permit for any trapping in Utah whatsoever.

Thank you.

Which best describes your position regarding the 2021–22 cougar recommendations? Strongly disagree

Do you have any additional comments about these recommendations?

My name is Denise Peterson and I am a resident of Utah and a Conservation Advocate, GIS and Media Specialist for the Mountain Lion Foundation. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on DWR's cougar hunt recommendations.

First, I would like to offer a couple of recommendations, based primarily on correspondence we have had with the Utah Houndsmen Association.

These include:

1. Not adding the Beaver East unit to predator management status.
 - a. We would further recommend not adding any more units to predator management status until the DWR establishes clear criteria for when a unit enters and exits predator management status. The public should also be given opportunities to provide feedback as these criteria are created. And, ...

2. That hunters are not permitted to kill any collared cougars so that researchers can accurately study cougars in Utah without interference.

These recommendations by UHA are in line with current research on cougar management and we'd like to support them.

Mounting evidence suggests that a management approach of intense cougar population control to increase deer populations is less effective than one might expect. Research published by Dr. Hilary Cooley and others in 2009 found that heavy cougar harvest corresponds with increased immigration that more than compensates for cougar removal. More recently, a study published in 2020 by Drs. John Laundre' and Chris Papouchis found that deer populations in a state where cougars are not hunted, show no significant differences in density and abundance compared to deer populations in states that allow cougar hunting, when controlling for other factors.

Instead of targeting cougars and other predators to boost big game species, we instead need to address climate issues such as droughts and wildfire, as well as habitat loss and fragmentation due to urban expansion. We ask that DWR reevaluate mule deer and bighorn sheep population objectives and set more realistic targets for the species that incorporate current habitat availability and climate factors. We further ask that DWR factor in the impacts of domestic livestock and disease transmission to wild populations instead of defaulting to killing more cougars.

Finally, we ask that the DWR consider the myriad ecosystem services that cougars provide when establishing their hunt recommendations. These cats keep big game populations healthy, while also promoting biodiversity. Cougars also predate on deer with chronic wasting disease which improves the health of deer herds, which benefits hunters. Moreover, one recent study found that cougars actually help keep roadways safer by changing deer behavior and reducing deer-vehicle collisions.

These cats have much to offer for both Utah's hunting and non-hunting communities, and the hunt recommendations should reflect this reality.

Thank you for your time.