



Washington Department of
FISH and WILDLIFE



WAC #220-415-100

Cougar Hunting Seasons and
Regulations

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Cougars

- There are many facets to cougar management and they are interconnected
 - Recreational Hunting
 - Public Safety/Livestock depredation
 - At Risk Ungulates
- The options we presented are intended to allow for additional recreational harvest in areas where densities could be higher based on harvest statistics and conflict information
- We have heard the public's concerns regarding the other important facets and are addressing them as follows

Public Safety and Livestock Depredation

- We will continue to respond to these calls and resolve them on a case by case basis
 - In the 2018-19 season we removed 101 cougars in response to public safety and livestock depredation
- We will begin the revision process for WAC 220-440-030 Public Safety Cougar Removal, using an external working group to help create new tools to help reduce cougar conflict in rural, urban and suburban communities.

At Risk Ungulates

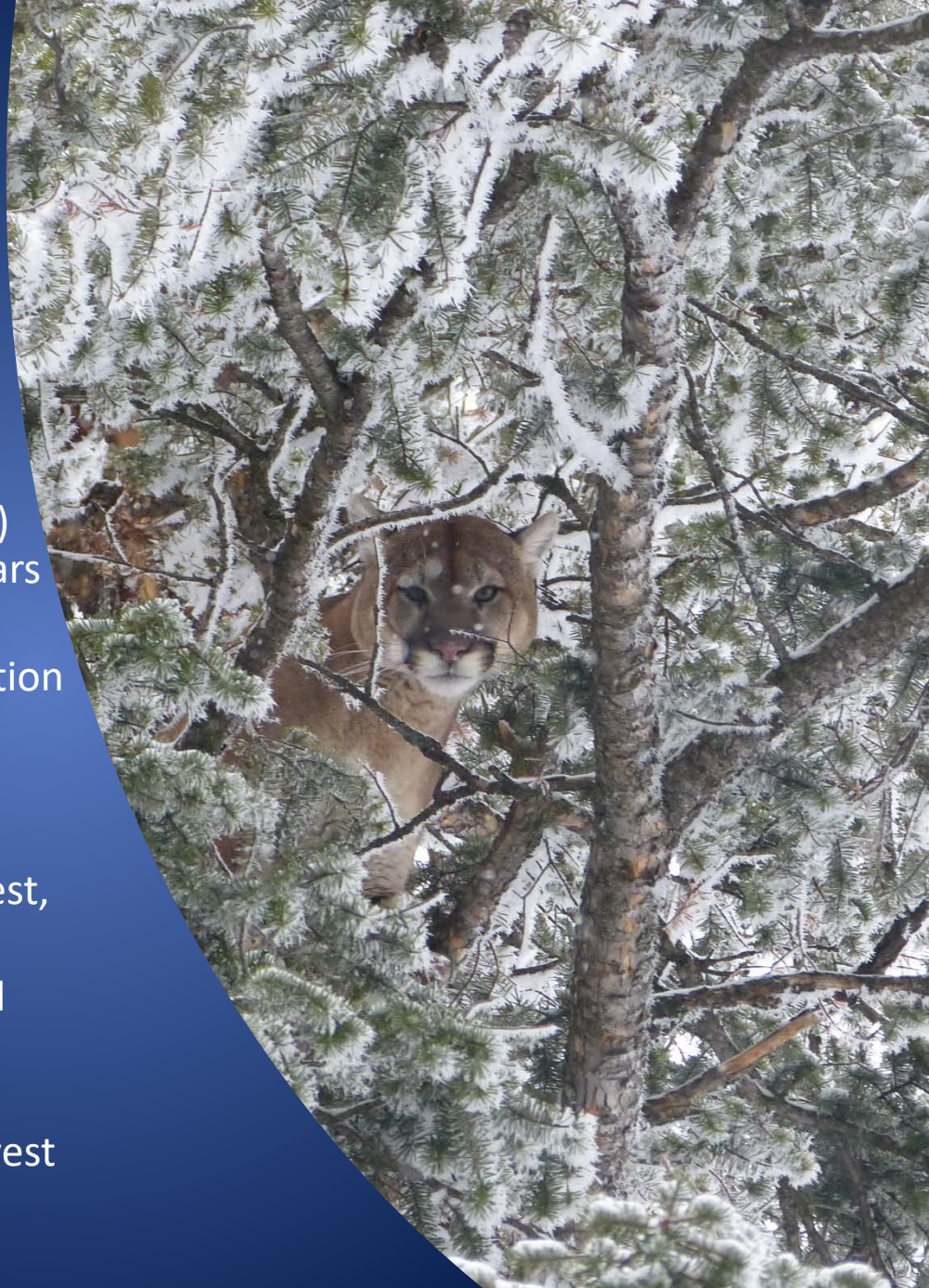
- We will continue assessing our at risk ungulate populations and consider predator control in herds where predation appears to be a limiting factor

Recommended options

- No change in season dates – Early general season Sept. 1 – Dec. 31, late general season Jan. 1 – April 30 for all options.
- **Option 1:** Status quo with one caveat, the density we used to set the guideline is the median of 5 research projects (2.34) that were conducted in Washington.
- The median is a better measure because it is not affected by outliers in the data.
- In the past we used the mean (2.2). Using the median adds 32 cougars to the statewide guideline.

Recommended options

- **Option 2:** Uses a median density (1.91) and is calculated using only adult cougars (24+ months).
- When compared with the 2019 this option reduces the guideline by 19.
- When compared with option 1, this option reduces the guideline by 51.
- This has the potential to increase harvest, because:
 - harvested sub-adult cougars would not count toward the guideline for season closure.
 - about 30% (73) of the current harvest consists of sub-adults .



Recommended options

- **Option3:** Adjusts the guideline upward for 19 units that exceeded the guideline by December 31 at least once in the past 5 years.
- The new guideline is based on the highest harvest in the past 5 years.
- In this option there is the assumption that density is higher in these areas.
- In two PMUs we adjusted the guidelines so they did not exceed an assumed density 4.15 cougars per 100 square kilometers. This was done to keep the density within an acceptable range based on research conducted in the western United States.
- This guideline includes adults and sub-adults.

Recommended options

- **Option 4:** Like option 3, but calculates the assumed density based on adult cougars and only adult cougars count towards the guideline.



Option comparison

	Option 1 median density			Option 2 Median density adult only			Option 3 extend season			Option 4 extend season adult only		
Hunt Area	Harvest Guideline		Change from 2019	Harvest Guideline		Change from 2019	Harvest Guideline		Change from 2019	Harvest Guideline		Change from 2019
Total Guideline	220	293	+32	178	242	-19	273	346	+85	229	295	+34
Estimated Harvest	194	259	+15	225	306	+62	241	306	+62	289	373	+129
Statewide % harvest based on statewide median density	9.1	12.1		10.5	14.3		11.3	14.3		13.6	17.5	



Recommended Adjustment

- Pages 7
- Change: (a) All cougar of the appropriate age class killed by licensed hunters during the early and late hunting seasons, shall be counted toward the harvest guideline.
- Rationale:
 - The current rule language does not allow for options that consider only counting specific age classes towards the guideline. This change will allow that.
 - The current rule language includes cougars that are harvested through the public safety removal rule, WAC 220-440-030 towards the guideline. It is not appropriate to count cougars harvested under this rule because those removals are intended to deal with public safety.
 - We also intend to modify WAC 220-440-030 soon, and it is unclear how potential changes will affect WAC 220-415-100, thus it would be wise to keep them separate.

Summary of comments

- We received 177 online comments
 - 52% (89) respondent generally agreed
 - 34% (58) respondents generally disagreed
 - 14% (30) respondents were neutral
- We received 555 emails and 1 letter
 - 532 were a form letter in opposition to predator hunting
 - Eight were in favor of at least one of the proposed options
 - The rest fell into 3 camps
 - No cougar hunting
 - More cougar hunting
 - No change



Summary of comments

- We received many comments about hound hunting
- Only 33 people picked an option
 - Option 1 – 21% (7)
 - Option 2 – 3% (1)
 - Option 3 – 36% (12)
 - Option 4 – 39% (13)
- Most of those that commented during the March commission meeting indicated that they would like to see more cougar hunting opportunity and a reduction in cougar numbers to help ungulates and increase public safety.
- We extended the written public comment period and received 91 comments. The majority (87) said that they preferred option one and most did not want cougars hunted at all. Two people advocated for more cougar hunting generally.
- We also received a letter and survey from The Humane Society of the United States. The survey was related to how people felt about predator hunting.



Questions?

