



Urge Governor Inslee to reverse the undemocratic and arbitrary cougar-quota decision

In April 2015, in an abrupt two-minute exchange, the Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife Commission raised the hunting quota for cougars (*Puma concolor*) by 50 to 100 percent in areas of the state where wolves also live. The Commission made this decision *without* providing prior notice to the public, giving the public *no* opportunity to comment, and *without* the benefit of a formal presentation of cougar population dynamics by the Department of Fish & Wildlife's own biologists.

Timeline: Washington Wildlife Commission snubbed hundreds of citizens

On June 30, animal welfare, conservation organizations and Dr. Gary Koehler, former research scientist with the Department, filed a formal petition that asked the Commission to reverse this arbitrary decision. On August 21, the Commission voted 7 to 1 to keep its controversial decision in place, ignoring more than 1,300 citizens and several non-governmental organizations.

On September 18, The Humane Society of the United States, Center for Biological Diversity, Mountain Lion Foundation, WildFutures The Cougar Fund, Predator Defense, The Lands Council, Kettle Range Conservation Group and Dr. Gary Kohler, submitted an appeal to Governor Inslee to return cougar hunting quotas to scientifically-justifiable levels.

The Commission failed to follow its own rules, wasted millions of tax dollars.

- According to 13 years of Washington-based, scientific research, the Commission's April 2015 quotas will harm some cougar populations and increase mortality to dependent cougar kittens.
- The Commission wasted an estimated 5 million dollars of taxpayer money when it jettisoned the cougar studies conducted in Washington.
- The Commission failed to uphold the public's trust in wildlife management. It failed to follow its own rules concerning giving the public adequate notice. The abrupt decision gave the public no opportunity to voice an opinion.

Washington residents highly value cougars.

In 2010, the wildlife department spent considerable taxpayer dollars researching Washingtonians' values about cougars. Studies found that Washingtonians—including those in rural areas—highly value cougars with more than 90 percent in agreement that cougars are essential to their ecosystems *and* have an inherent right to live.ⁱ Washington citizens value cougars as icons of the wild and want them conserved, not turned into trophies as evidenced by a strong majority of voters, who in 1996, banned the hounding of cougars by ballot initiative.

When one cougar is killed, it harms the entire population

If a hunter kills a nursing female cougar, her young kittens will die from starvation or dehydration. Additionally, when hunters remove the stable adult cougars from a population, it attracts young male cougars to these vacancies. The immigrating young males often times will kill the kittens from the previous male so they can sire their own. In the process, however, females defending their kittens are also frequently killed too. It's not just the one cougar in the hunter's crosshairs who dies: hunting causes a harmful domino effect in cougar populations.ⁱⁱ

Please contact Governor Inslee and urge him to support the appeal and reverse the Commission's ill-considered decision.

Sources

ⁱ Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, "Cougar Outreach and Education in Washington State" (Nov. 30, 2010).

ⁱⁱ C. M. S. Lambert et al., "Cougar Population Dynamics and Viability in the Pacific Northwest," *Journal of Wildlife Management* 70, (2006); H. S. Cooley et al., "Source Populations in Carnivore Management: Cougar Demography and Emigration in a Lightly Hunted Population," *Animal Conservation* 12, no. 4 (2009); H. S. Cooley et al., "Does Hunting Regulate Cougar Populations? A Test of the Compensatory Mortality Hypothesis," *Ecology* 90, no. 10 (2009); H. S. Robinson and R. Desimone, "The Garnet Range Mountain Lion Study: Characteristics of a Hunted Population in West-Central Montana: Final Report," *Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks*, (2011); H. S. Robinson et al., "A Test of the Compensatory Mortality Hypothesis in Mountain Lions: A Management Experiment in West-Central Montana," *Journal of Wildlife Management* 78, no. 5 (2014); H. S. Robinson et al., "Sink Populations in Carnivore Management: Cougar Demography and Immigration in a Hunted Population," *Ecological Applications* 18, no. 4 (2008); R. B. Wielgus et al., "Effects of Male Trophy Hunting on Female Carnivore Population Growth and Persistence," *Biological Conservation* 167, (2013); R. A. Beausoleil et al., "Research to Regulation: Cougar Social Behavior as a Guide for Management," *Wildlife Society Bulletin* 37, no. 3 (2013); Kaylie A. Peebles et al., "Effects of Remedial Sport Hunting on Cougar Complaints and Livestock Depredations," *Plos One* 8, no. 11 (2013).