

**MOUNTAIN LION MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES
FOR
LION DAU L-11
GAME MANAGEMENT UNITS
48, 481, 49, 56, & 561**

Prepared for:
Colorado Division of Wildlife
Southeast Region

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INTRODUCTION:

The goal of the Division of Wildlife is to maintain a healthy, self-sustaining mountain lion population that is in balance with its habitat with a minimum of game damage and nuisance complaints. This management plan establishes guidelines for lion management in the upper Arkansas River Valley. Lion hunting and harvest will be adjusted as necessary to achieve the unit objective.

DESCRIPTION OF MANAGEMENT AREA AND HABITAT

This management unit is located in the upper Arkansas River Valley, from the headwaters downstream to Salida on the west side of the river and downstream to Johnson Village on the east side of the river. It also includes a small part of the South Platte drainage west and south of Fairplay in South Park. It includes game management units 48, 481, 49, 56, and 561. Elevation ranges from 7,000' to 14,433', the highest point in Colorado. Approximately 79% of the 1,493 square miles in this unit are public lands.

Habitat quality ranges from poor to good, largely depending on elevation, aspect, vegetative stands, and prey populations they support. Habitat types include riparian, pinion-juniper woodland, semi-desert shrubland, grassland, montane shrubland, mountain meadow, montane forest, subalpine forest, and alpine tundra. Some of this area is not considered good lion habitat because of high altitude, low prey density and lack of hunting cover.

Land use in this unit is primarily agricultural or recreational/forest use. Agricultural use is primarily livestock grazing or grass and alfalfa hay production. Recently a large amount of private land has been converted to seasonal or year-round residential land use. Much of this conversion has occurred at lower elevations impacting the better quality habitat for prey species and thus mountain lions. Recreational activities, which primarily occur on public land, include camping, hiking, hunting, fishing, off road vehicle use, snowmobiling, and skiing.

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SPORT HARVEST OBJECTIVE: The sport harvest should not exceed 8-15 lions on a 3-year floating average. Harvest over the last 10 years has averaged 5 per year ranging from 0 to 9. The 3-year floating average has ranged from 4 to 7 over the same time period. The current population is believed to be stable to increasing and can support a larger harvest on a sustained basis. The current quota of 18 includes 10 in GMUs 48, 481, 49, 50, and 500 and 8 in GMUs 56 and 561. 50 and 500 are in L-13 but included in the quota system for hunting purposes. These quotas have not been reached and allow unlimited lion hunting opportunity.

PRESCRIPTIONS: If sport harvest exceeds the three-year floating average, the annual quota will be reduced. We will also attempt to redirect hunting pressure by informing the public of other areas where an increase in harvest is desired.

DAMAGE OBJECTIVE: Damage caused by mountain lions should not exceed \$1,000 per year on a 3-year floating average. There have been no damage payments in this DAU over the last ten years.

PRESCRIPTIONS: If damage caused by lions exceeds the objective we will focus management activities on the individual lions causing damage. Whenever possible, licensed hunters will be used to remove lions causing damage. Wildlife Services will be requested to remove lions involved in significant livestock depredations.

HUMAN/LION CONFLICT OBJECTIVE: Lion conflict reports should not exceed 5 per year. During the last two years there have only been 2 reports submitted.

PRESCRIPTIONS: If conflict reports exceed the annual objective, information will be provided to the public, livestock owners, land use agencies, and law enforcement agencies on how to reduce or eliminate conflicts. Site inspections will be conducted and reporting parties will be advised on how to avoid conflicts.