

**MOUNTAIN LION MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES
FOR
LION DAU L-2
GAME MANAGEMENT UNITS
3, 301, 4, 441, 5, 14, & 214**

Prepared for:
Colorado Division of Wildlife
West Region

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DESCRIPTION OF MANAGEMENT AREA AND HABITAT

DAU L-2 is located in northwest portion of the state, north of the towns of Maybell, Craig, and Steamboat Springs. The DAU is bounded on the west by the Little Snake River, on the north by the Colorado-Wyoming state line, on the east by the continental divide, and on the south by the Yampa River. The DAU roughly matches the Bears Ears deer and elk DAUs. The topography and vegetation ranges from mountainous, alpine areas in the east to rolling sage flats in the west.

No formal estimate of the lion population has been made. Many people believe that the population numbers may have increased over the last 10 years.

TOTAL LION HARVEST OBJECTIVE: The harvest varies between 2 to 12 the last 10 years with average of 8. The current harvest quota for the total DAU is 22 lion. This has increased by more than double in the last 5 years. The recent increase in quota is primarily attributable to requests by the Colorado Department of Agriculture. Past quotas have been reached in some units but the overall quota has not been reached. Concern has been expressed by some DWMs that an increasing portion of the harvest is young males and females. A breakdown by individual units is given below:

Unit 3 & 301 - Lower elevation, open sage ground with limited areas of good lion habitat. Managed together with a current quota of 5.

Unit 4 north & 5 - Foothills transition zone dominated by mountain shrub types. Good lion habitat with year round populations except in the higher eastern portions. Managed together with a current quota of 12 lions. This quota has increased steadily, up from 3 in 1994.

Unit 4 south & 441 - This is a fairly high elevation unit with low lion numbers during the winter season. The current quota is 5 and few are taken annually.

December 4, 2000

Unit 14 & 214 - High elevation units with few lions at any time of year. There is no quota for these units.

With the recent increases in harvest quotas and considering that the current quota is not been attained, no increase is recommended. This area has a high potential for game damage and lion-human conflict; a high lion population is not desirable. There is also concern about the level of predation the lion population exerts on the deer herd. Current quota numbers should be sufficient to achieve desired harvest in this population.

TOTAL LION DAMAGE OBJECTIVE: There is a high level of grazing by sheep and cattle in this DAU and a commensurate concern over present and potential damage levels. Annual damage costs have ranged between \$5,000 to \$32,000, with the high level in 1987. There seems to be no correlation between higher quota numbers and the level of damage. Damage harvest is usually 0 with none recorded the last 4 years. Use of a damage investigator to quickly verify kills and the prompt removal of problem lions should be used with the goal to hold the 3-year average damage costs below \$20,000.

NUISANCE LION COMPLAINTS: There are no reports of lion-human conflicts in the last few years. As mentioned earlier, the number of sightings and tracks in and near areas of development have increased and there is potential for lion numbers to present a problem, especially in the areas of unit 3 and 301. Tolerance of aggressive or acclimated lions in this area is low; therefore lions that show these tendencies are quickly taken out of the population. Education\information in areas of potential conflicts should be used to keep the number of complaints low, with a goal of no more than 5 annually.

LION PREDATION ON OTHER WILDLIFE: In July, 1999, the Colorado Wildlife Commission approved a Mammalian Predator Policy which calls for predator control actions when it is determined that the predator species is inhibiting the ability of the Division to attain management objectives for other wildlife populations. Currently, studies related to deer fawn summer mortality and both fawn and adult winter mortality indicate that mountain lions are not a major factor in population regulation. Elk populations are currently well above objectives in these DAUs with elk survival rates extremely high. Antelope populations are also at or above objective.

Sport hunting is the primary method of lion population control and will continue to be used to harvest lion at a level that will allow maximum hunter opportunity and maintain a healthy, viable lion population. Individual animals that cause excessive damage to livestock, damage to personal property, or pose a threat to human health and welfare will be removed as necessary. No control action, other than sport harvest, is anticipated to benefit deer, elk, or antelope.