

**MOUNTAIN LION MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES
FOR
LION DAU L-19
GAME MANAGEMENT UNITS
83, 85, 851, & 140**

Prepared for:
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Southeast Region

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INTRODUCTION

This management area plan will establish management guideline objectives for mountain lion populations in the southeastern San Luis Valley, Purgatoire and Huerfano River Valleys, and Mesa de Maya. Lion hunting and harvest will be adjusted when necessary in an effort to achieve the unit objective.

The goal of the CDOW is to maintain a healthy, self-sustaining population of mountain lion that is in balance with available habitat, minimize nuisance complaints, minimize game damage complaints and also maintain an environment that supports a rich, vegetative and wildlife community that will maintain a self-sustaining lion population.

DESCRIPTION OF MANAGEMENT AREA AND HABITAT

This lion DAU is located in the southeastern mountains of Colorado, including the eastern San Luis Valley, southern Sangre de Cristo Mountains, Purgatoire, Huerfano, and Apishipa Canyons, and Mesa de Maya of Unit 140. It is composed of four Game Management Units (GMU) that include GMU's 83, 85, 140, and 851. The CDOW designation of this lion Data Analysis Unit is L-19.

It is bounded on the north by US Highway 160, the Alamosa-Costilla County Line, Pass Creek Road, and Colo. 69; on the east by I-25, US Highway 160, and Colo. 389; on the south by the New Mexico line; on the west by the Rio Grande River. Drainages include the Rio Grande River, Huerfano River, Cuchara River, and Purgatoire River.

Predominant vegetative communities include alpine tundra, sub-alpine conifer, montane conifer, montane shrub, Great Basin desert shrub, and plains grassland. Agriculture is the predominant land use in L-19. Livestock grazing occurs on private and public lands. Irrigated and dryland farming is primarily alfalfa and grass hay. A large percentage of these units is privately owned property and permission to hunt is often difficult of obtain. Large land holdings are being sold to development and large tracts of land traditionally used

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by lion hunters are being lost for hunting access.

HARVEST SUMMARY:

1988 THROUGH 1997	Total harvest	127
	Sport harvest	113
	Total males in harvest	66
	<u>Total females in harvest</u>	<u>61</u>
10-year average annual harvest		11.3
1997 harvest quota for all Units except unit 83		30
1997 Harvest quota for Unit 83		10

HUNTER SUCCESS:

1997	60%
1996	47%
1995	29%
1994	41%

HARVEST OBJECTIVE:

- Maintain current harvest quota for 3-5 years.
- Monitor harvest rates for continued stabilization.
- Maintain existing harvest levels over time with existing harvest quota.

DISCUSSION:

- Mountain lion sightings by field officers and the public are higher than they have been in any of the previous 10 years.
- There is no indication there are fewer lions now than in the last ten years.

GAME DAMAGE OBJECTIVE: Damage caused by mountain lions should not exceed \$1,735 on a 3-year floating average basis.

PRESCRIPTIONS:

- Focus on individual lion(s) causing damage.
- Direct Wildlife Services to remove lions in significant livestock deprecations.
- Capture and re-locate offending lion.
- Monitor and educate.
- Destroy mountain lion.
- Utilize services of outfitter, licensed hunter harvest is preferred if conditions allow.

HUMAN/LION CONFLICT OBJECTIVE: An estimate of 12 reports per year will be used as an average based on field input. An objective of 12 human/lion reports per year is recommended.

Mountain lion sightings and human/lion conflicts are increasing annually. There are several factors that contribute to this increase.

- Rapid growth along the Front Range.
- Residential encroachment.
- Growing prey base in rural residential areas.
- More frequent interaction.
- Fragmented land use, increase in hobby farms.

PRESCRIPTIONS:

- Document reports of human/lion conflict.
- Confirm and document lion sightings.
- Provide information to the public, livestock owners, and land use agencies.
- Conduct site visits; offer professional advice and literature.
- Consider non-lethal options, case by case.