

## **Bear and Cougar Rule Changes for Consideration**

The New Mexico Department of Game and Fish (Department) has opened the Bear and Cougar Rule to develop prospective amendments to season dates, bag limits, maximum harvest limits, manner & method of take, and other hunting regulations for these species. This rule opens once every 4 years and the Department is currently seeking public comments on the following initial ideas being considered:

### **BEAR**

- Potential increase in harvest limits in specific Bear Management Zones (BMZs) based on research the Department is conducting in cooperation with New Mexico State University. The study will provide updated population estimates in the Sangre de Cristo, Sacramento, and Sandia mountains. Additionally, the Department has updated the bear habitat model using the latest land cover information which would also result in increased bear harvest potential in certain zones.
- Move Game Management Unit (GMU) 48 from BMZ 3 to BMZ 4 to group similar habitat types in the same BMZ.
- Add GMUs 39 and 40 to BMZ 6. GMUs 39 and 40 are currently closed to bear hunting, but the new habitat model and ground observations suggest there are sufficient habitat and bears to provide additional harvest opportunity.
- Modifications to season structure and restricting proportions of total harvest limits to specific hunt timeframes.

### **COUGAR**

- Allow use of traps and snares to harvest cougars. Only 30% of the cougar harvest limit is reached each year, in spite of a year round season and an increased bag limit of 2 cougars. Traps and snares would be allowed in Cougar Management Zones (CMZs) in which harvest limits are not being met. To prevent hunters from being in violation of the federal Endangered Species Act, CMZ L would be excluded to prevent the unlikely accidental capture of a jaguar.
- Prohibit use of hounds during deer and elk archery seasons; this is similar to the current restrictions on hound use for hunting bears.
- Move Game Management Unit (GMU) 18 from Cougar Management Zone (CMZ) I to CMZ H to put similar habitat types in the same zone.
- Allow licensed deer and elk hunters on the Sargent, Humphries, Rio Chama, Urraca, Colin Neblett, E.S. Barker, and Marquez Wildlife Management Areas who also possess a cougar license to hunt cougars with the same weapon type as their license during the period of their hunt. Dogs would not be allowed.