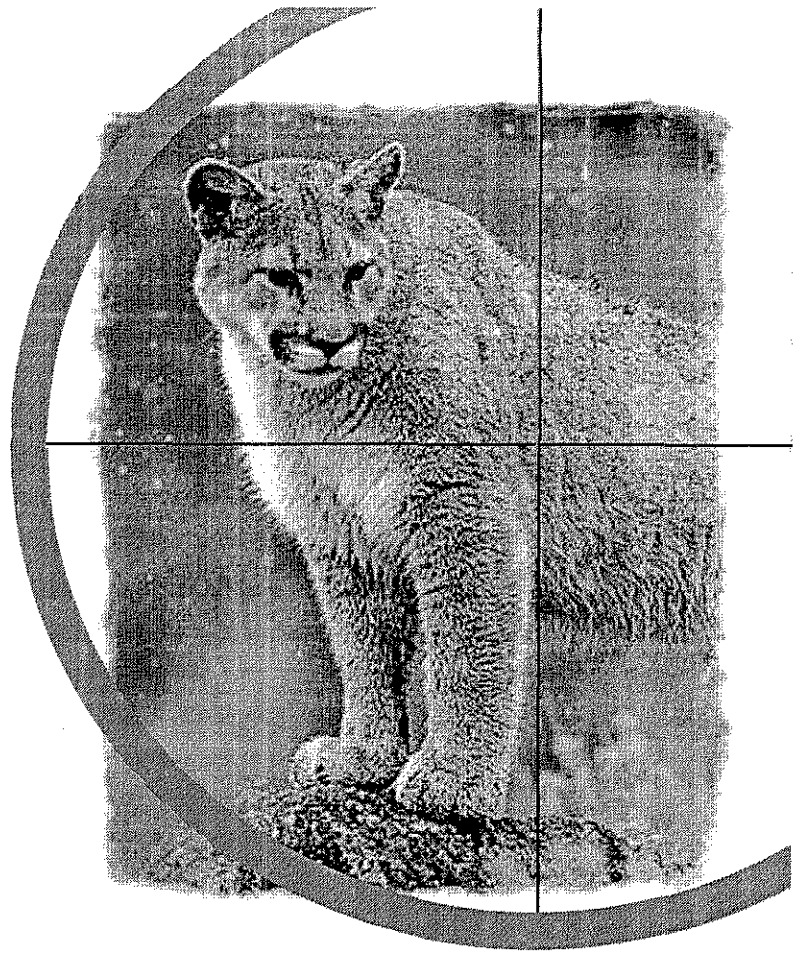


NEW MEXICO COUGARS UNDER FIRE!

"We are simply asking that the Department implement a defensible recovery plan based on the best available science in order to bring back bighorn sheep. Persecuting predators like cougars will not save New Mexico's bighorn. Deliberate and serious recovery efforts will," said Lisa Jennings, Executive Director, APNM. "Cougars and bighorn sheep have historically coexisted. By examining and altering other limiting factors such as habitat degradation and disease transmission from domestic livestock, we can ensure the continued abundant presence of both these species in our state."

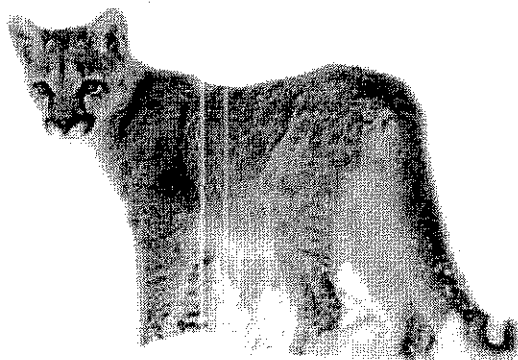


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WILDLIFE IN JEOPARDY:

New Mexico's Faulty Cougar Policies

At July's New Mexico Game Commission meeting, all six Commissioners present (Commissioner Emery was absent) voted to approve a controversial cougar killing program promoted by the Department of Game and Fish (Department) in order to ostensibly protect New Mexico's endangered bighorn sheep population. The approved regulations will allow for the killing of up to 34 cougars per year, for five years, in four bighorn sheep territories, whether or not cougars have killed bighorn sheep. In essence, any cougar in bighorn sheep territory is a dead cougar.

This indefensible plan will begin on October 1 in areas around the Sierra Ladrone Mountains, the Manzano Mountains, the Big and Little Hatchet Mountains, and the Peloncillo Mountains. The Department has not stipulated what specific methods will be used to kill the cougars, but says that a combination of "sport harvest", houndsmen and trappers will be used. The Department says it intends to evaluate the effectiveness of its cougar-killing program on increasing the bighorn population after five years, but hasn't shown that it will properly monitor cougar populations to do so.

To add insult to injury, the planned killing will take place without the proper environmental analysis to determine the effect of the killing program on cougar populations.

Currently, no one can say whether the state's cougar population is stable, increasing or decreasing. In addition, the killing will be taking place in at least one Wilderness Area (an area "where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man"), and

in three Wilderness Study Areas (WSA's).

While there is no question that the state's bighorn populations are in dire straits, killing cougars is unlikely to solve the problem of dwindling bighorn populations. Instead, APNM has been stressing that the following be done:



"Politically-based decisions which scapegoat a natural predator instead of addressing decades of habitat mismanagement are neither defensible nor effective, and will surely drive these wild sheep even closer to the brink of extinction."

— Lisa Jennings

- develop and implement a comprehensive bighorn sheep recovery plan;
- evaluate the impact on bighorn sheep of grazing, human encroachment, fire suppression, etc. and restore damaged areas;
- implement a more aggressive bighorn sheep captive breeding plan;
- since a decision to kill cougars has already been made, the least the Department could do is to use the flexibility intended in the cougar zone management plan to safeguard cougar populations by adding another refuge zone and reducing quotas in other areas.

Certain Commissioners have actually said in public meetings that they are not interested in more research, they just want to see

results. These kinds of outrageous statements underscore the need for a wildlife policy-making body which understands the complexity of wildlife management and is willing to tackle problems at their roots.

WHAT TO DO:

- 1.** Write the New Mexico Game Commissioners and let them know you disapprove of their decision to implement yet another ill-advised cougar killing program. Write them at:

William (Bill) Brininstool,
Chairman
P.O. Drawer A
Jal, NM 88252
(w) 395-2010;
(h) 225-2870;
(fax) 395-2914
Represents District 1:
Curry, DeBaca, Roosevelt,
Chaves, Lincoln, Otero,
Eddy and Lea counties

Gail Jean Cramer:
405 San Paula
Farmington, NM 87401
(w) 599-0340-school
teacher; (h) 327-6778;
(fax) 599-0385
Represents District 3: San
Juan, McKinley, Cibola,
Valencia, Sandoval, Los
Alamos and Rio Arriba
counties

Stephen Doerr
2106 Aspen
Portales, NM 88130
(w) 359-1289;
(h) 356-6700;
(fax) 359-1898
Statewide (at large)
representative

Bud Hettinga
P.O. Box 2409
Las Cruces, NM 88004
(w) 524-3551;
(fax) 526-0835
Represents District 2:
Catron, Socorro, Grant,
Hidalgo, Luna, Sierra and
Doña Ana counties

George A. Ortega
2908 Calle de Pinos Altos
Santa Fe, NM 87505
(w) (h) 471-6044;
(fax) 438-4284

Represents District 4:
Santa Fe, Taos, Colfax,
Union, Mora, Harding,
Quay, San Miguel,
Guadalupe and Torrance
counties

Steve Padilla
1641 Speakman SE
Albuquerque, NM 87123
(h) 298-0901;
(fax) 298-1901
Statewide (at large)
representative

Steven Emery
13233 Jo Lane,
P.O. Box 93665
Albuquerque, NM 87199
(w) 293-0525
Represents District 5:
Bernalillo county

- 2.** Write to Governor Johnson and let him know that both the Department and the Commission continue to promote wildlife decisions not based in sound science and which don't address the root causes of problems. Ask him to help reform the process by which wildlife decisions are made in New Mexico. Here are some talking points:

- New Mexico should have a Wildlife Commission, not a Game Commission, since most wildlife is not even being protected under current state laws;
- a wildlife commission should consist mostly of trained biologists and ecologists, not lay people;
- the Department and Commission are not using recommendations from preeminent institutions (such as the Hornocker Wildlife Institute) regarding wildlife management.

Write him at:

Governor Gary Johnson
New Mexico State Capitol
Room 400
Santa Fe, N.M. 87503