



Photo: Jason Klassi

Reasons for Hope

Mountain lions are extremely sensitive to development, road construction and other human disturbances to their habitat. Our outsized influence on their lives means we are also able to help them, and there are many reasons to be hopeful about the role that individual people coming together can play in mountain lion conservation.

Your support of the Mountain Lion Foundation now helps us push for the safe crossings and healthy habitat mountain lions need to survive and engender the human concern and empathy that they need to thrive.

CALIFORNIA — In 2023, California successfully banned another set of rodenticides that cause severe illness in mountain lions. Many Mountain Lion Foundation supporters wrote to their elected officials to help ensure this outcome.

This year also saw continued progress on the largest urban wildlife crossing in the world, a project conceived principally for the benefit of mountain lions near Los Angeles. Mountain lions' needs have also driven the planning of wildlife crossings elsewhere in the state. Our September webinar with the author of "On Crossings" highlighted the importance of creating wildlife crossings.

In 2019, the Mountain Lion Foundation and the Center for Biological Diversity asked California to list the Central and Southern California populations of mountain lions under the state's Endangered Species Act; their decision is still pending, and in the meantime the species enjoys all of the act's protections.

Our ongoing co-existence work in California helps livestock producers prevent encounters with mountain lions. State agency officials are now requiring adequate nonlethal deterrents to be in place before they will consider killing a lion that has attacked livestock.

FLORIDA — The film "Path of the Panther" debuted this year. This gripping tale of survival shares the idea that we can follow our love of beauty and nature toward better stewardship of our natural world. Also this year, federal officials proposed a large wildlife refuge to protect mountain lion habitat near the Everglades and they are acquiring land to provide safe crossings from south Florida to Georgia. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service abandoned a plan to remove panther FP260 from the wild over depredations, thanks to public backlash and urging from the Mountain Lion Foundation and several other groups. High levels road mortality and low genetic diversity keep this lone holdout of pumas on the East Coast in a state of perpetual risk, but social tolerance for panthers is strong and growing stronger.

COLORADO — While California is currently the only state that has banned mountain lion trophy hunting (thanks to our members' work in decades past), that statistic could be changing. The Mountain Lion Foundation has actively supported an effort to put this issue directly to Colorado residents. We have tapped our past ballot measure expertise, our scientific background in the needs of mountain lions and our knowledge of what resonates when communicating with the public to help shape the ballot initiative and propel the campaign forward. In the fall of 2024, Colorado voters will decide whether to ban mountain lion trophy hunting.



Learn more at mountainlion.org

Cause for Concern

Along with the reasons for hope, we have also observed a steady uptick in incursions against mountain lions and poorly informed decision-making by agency officials across the West. Your support of the Mountain Lion Foundation will allow us to act decisively on behalf of mountain lions throughout their range, meet these threats head on and inspire people to advocate for wildlife agency reform.

RISING HUNTING QUOTAS, LOOSE RESTRICTIONS & CRUEL PRACTICES

Levels of mountain lion hunting are too high across the American West. Even where hound hunting has been banned, the number of mountain lions killed in recent years is higher than it was before those bans.

- UTAH — In 2023, a last-minute amendment to a bill in the legislature swept away — with no debate or testimony — almost all regulation of cougar hunting, and it legalized cougar trapping as well.
- IDAHO — The state commission voted in 2021 to lift almost all restrictions on lion hunting; the state is only maintaining a two-month hunting season closure.
- EVERY STATE EXCEPT OREGON & WASHINGTON — It is still legal to chase mountain lions with dogs wearing GPS trackers and other technology, corner the lions in a tree, and then shoot them at close range.

DISREGARD FOR BASIC ECOLOGY & SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

Management decisions are not being made according to the best-available science, and baseless claims about mountain lion populations being on the rise are regularly popping up in public testimony.

- SOUTH DAKOTA — State officials are considering accepting a lower mountain lion population, in exchange for more hunting opportunity, without any scientific justification.
- WASHINGTON — In 2019, officials began rejecting population data developed through 20 years of field research, instead using subjective perceptions of population size to increase hunting quotas. In 2022, when elk populations in the Blue Mountains declined (following drought, heavy snowfall and wildfire), agency management opted to increase cougar hunting rather than conducting research on habitat quality or other known potential factors.
- MONTANA & WYOMING — Policymakers have cited declining mule deer populations as a reason to significantly increase cougar hunting — with the stated goal of maintaining lower mountain lion populations for years to come. Deer populations are vastly more likely to be down due to disease and habitat changes driven by climate change.

OPAQUE POLICYMAKING & NO REPRESENTATION FOR WILDLIFE INTERESTS

Along with ignoring scientific information, many agencies are also out of touch with the values of state residents, largely because the processes have no mechanisms to account for broad public opinion. Across the West, hunting advocacy groups exert undue influence over state game and wildlife departments.

- NORTH DAKOTA — Hunting policy is set without any formal public comment.
- NEBRASKA — The decision to expand hunting was made at a meeting at a remote country club with no option to attend remotely.
- MONTANA — The citizen advisory panel that recommended a hunting quota increase included houndsmen, trappers, boot hunters, hunting outfitters, large ranchers, small livestock owners, and other extractive users, with no seats for scientists, conservationists, or non-consumptive recreationists.
- TEXAS — State officials rejected a petition asking them to reclassify mountain lions as a game species (not a 'varmint'), gather more data and educate the public about living near mountain lions; officials instead convened an advisory body consisting primarily of ranchers and hunters to provide advice on future policy changes.

Learn more at mountainlion.org

