

# Cougar Conflict Science Review Team

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# Wildlife Committee, June 24

# What is the Cougar Conflict Science Review team?

Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of existing scientific literature and its applicability to cougar-human interactions in Washington State

- Factors that affect risk of human-cougar conflict
- Effects of cougar removals due to human-cougar interactions (including livestock)



# In scope

## 1. Peer-reviewed literature and agency reports about cougar conflict and its relationship to:

- Cougar hunting seasons,
- Cougar harvest rates (or magnitude),
- Cougar population density,
- Mitigative measures employed to reduce conflict,
- Cougar population demography
- Prey richness and availability
- Human activity and distribution on the landscape (while paying attention to rural, suburban, livestock production, hobby farms, wildlife feeding, etc.)
- Experiments or population treatments that address any of the above



# In scope

2. With no attempt to diminish the value of previous peer review, the team will:
  - Assess documents as to what questions they attempted to address in their study and how well they accomplished the task
  - Assess the documents in terms of scientific rigor (data, experimental design, analysis, and interpretation)
  - Identify which documents speculate (without data) on topics the authors didn't design the project to address
3. Identify questions of interest that haven't been adequately addressed to-date with formal research



# Out of scope

1. Analyzing data not presented in existing literature:
2. Making management strategy recommendations



# Science Team Members

1. Chuck Anderson – Mammal Research Lead – Colorado Parks and Wildlife
2. Anis Aoude – Game Division Manager – WDFW
3. Rich Beausoleil – Bear and Cougar Specialist – WDFW
4. Mark Hurley – Wildlife Research Manager – Idaho Fish and Game
5. Brian Kertson – Wildlife Research Scientist – WDFW
6. Bruce Johnson – Wildlife Research Scientist – Oregon Dept Fish & Wildl (ret.)
7. Donny Martorello – Wildlife Science Division Manager – WDFW
8. Scott McCorquodale – Wildlife Regional Program Manager – WDFW
9. Glen Sargeant – Research Wildlife Biologist – US Geological Survey
10. Stephanie Simek – Carnivore Section Manager – WDFW
11. Mick Cope – Wildlife Program Deputy Director – WDFW (facilitator)



# Questions Team will review and how articles were selected

See  
accompanying  
document

## What questions will the Science Team review focus on?

The science team is investigating the current state of knowledge related to the following questions. It's likely available literature does not rigorously address all of these questions; however, it is important that the team recognize the breadth of questions and ensure the available literature is evaluated.

1. Do cougar removals through recreational hunting and/or agency conflict response affect the number of cougar-human interactions?
2. Does the size (N or density) or trajectory of the cougar population affect cougar-human interaction levels?
3. Does the abundance, diversity, and/or distribution of prey affect cougar-human interaction levels?
4. Do preventative measures, such as nonlethal deterrence, quality husbandry, and outreach/education/information sharing affect the frequency of cougar interactions with people?
5. Do landscape characteristics (e.g., residential development levels and/or patterns, habitat type, connectivity) affect cougar-human interaction levels?
6. Does the number of people living, working, or recreating in cougar habitat affect the number of cougar-human interactions?
7. Is the number of conflict reports/complaints correlated with actual frequency of conflicts (i.e., is there published evidence that, with no change in real conflict, complaints may increase because of social tolerance or change in human perceptions [e.g., trail or doorbell camera use, news reports, etc.])?
8. Does the presence of other large carnivores, notably wolves, affect cougar proximity to, or the frequency of interactions with, people?
  - Via interspecific conflict between cougars and wolves
  - Via indirect effects of wolves on cougars because of wolf predation effects on natural prey abundance





# Milestones

Task	Due Date	Update
Team members and charter finalized	Mar 25, 2021	Completed
Science Team Review	Oct 1, 2021	In process
Final report	TBD	NA



# Questions?

