

Staff Update: Klickitat County Dangerous Wildlife Policy

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WDFW Commission Wildlife Committee, December 2, 2021





Outline

- Timeline recap
- WDFW activities in Klickitat County
- Update/concerns
- Next steps
- Discussion



Timeline Recap

- August 2019 – Sheriff issues KCSO Dangerous Wildlife Policy and Procedures declaring KCSO will be primary response to dangerous wildlife, cites RCW 77.15.245
- November 2019 – WDFW letter regarding policy
- Meeting with Sheriff – January 2020
- Follow-up communications between WDFW Enforcement and Sheriff/Undersheriff
- 2021 Legislative Proviso
- Meetings with Klickitat County citizen group – four meetings in 2021 (January, March, May, October)



WDFW Initial Response

- Nov. 2019 letter:
 - Coordination with WDFW essential
 - WDFW reporting requirement
 - Agency as a resource for expertise—depredation investigation, non-lethal alternatives
 - Importance of agency staff follow-up with reporting parties to provide resources



WDFW Ongoing Efforts

- Repeated reinforcement of need for timely reporting
- Requests for notification
- Conflict Specialist outreach in local communities
- Focus on education and prevention, identifying ways to be more accessible and visible to county residents

KCSO Activities

Aug. 2019 – Sept. 2021

Time period	KCSO calls received	Hounds deployed	Cougar Removals
Aug 2019-Mar 2020	79	44	14
April 2020-Mar 2021	52	28	9
April 2021-Sept 2021	25	11	3

- Cougars removed – 26
 - 8 cougar, 2 bear removed in 2021. Last removal 8/3/21
- WDFW was requested to assist twice for cougars, three times for bear.
- WDFW contacted ~15 additional times, either after the fact or not reached through WSP dispatch.

Recreational Harvest in Klickitat County GMUs

GMU		382	388	574	578
2019	Male	1	1	0	0
	Female	1	1	0	2
2020	Male	2	0	1	0
	Female	0	2	1	0

Total harvest:
2019 – 6
2020 – 6



Problem Statements

- The presence of a cougar on the landscape is not inherently a public safety issue.
 - Narrowly defining public safety is difficult.
- Lack of notification prevents WDFW from responding, assessing, and providing appropriate action/options.
- Reporting is inconsistent/sporadic.
- Unknown standard applied to deploying hound hunters.
- Concerns expressed in Nov. 2019 letter have come to fruition.



Next steps

(21) Within amounts appropriated in this section, the department, in coordination with statewide law enforcement agencies, must provide a **report to the legislature by January, 2022** on the number of cougars reported to the department as harvested by local government law enforcement agencies, training opportunities provided to local law enforcement agencies, and how cougar removals by local enforcement agencies impact the department's cougar management strategies.

- WDFW values coordination and partnership with local law enforcement, particularly when public safety is a concern.
- Trying to narrowly define public safety is challenging.
- Possible recommendation that the responsibility for dealing with cougar (and bear and bobcat, per RCW) be primarily with WDFW for protection of livestock, domestic animals, and private property.
- WDFW goal is to be the primary responders. We recognize that logistically, geographically, it isn't always possible for our staff to be first on scene.
 - Currently providing trainings, what LE can do until WDFW staff arrive.
 - Not looking to encroach on local LE authority regarding public safety, but it is essential that we be engaged so that we can bring our wildlife-specific expertise.
- Speak to potential impacts on recreational harvest.

Discussion

