

# 2021 Budget Proviso: Cougar Removals by Local Law Enforcement

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# 2021 Proviso Language

\$50,000 of the general fund-state appropriation for fiscal year 2022 and \$50,000 of the general fund-state appropriation for fiscal year 2023 are provided solely for the department to assist local jurisdictions in responding to cougar related public safety issues. The funding is available to a local jurisdiction if they have a signed agreement with the department that recognizes cougar management authority is vested in the department and provides criteria to determine if a cougar creates an actionable public safety risk for eligible financial assistance. For the purposes of this subsection, a cougar presence on private property alone does not create an actionable public safety risk.

(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.



# Findings

Determine the number of cougars reported to WDFW as killed by local law enforcement agencies in the state:

- Cougars reported removed by local law enforcement:
  - 1 by Kittitas County SO,
  - 1 citizen removal reported to City of Asotin PD,
  - 5 cougars removed (over 3 incidents) by Stevens County SO
  - 27 by Klickitat County SO.

Provide training opportunities to local law enforcement agencies:

- WDFW sent a letter to local LE agencies statewide. Eight responses, both east and west side of the state. WDFW will be providing training and asking for feedback on additional resources that would be helpful to local LE agencies in addressing these issues.



## How cougar removals by local LE agencies impact WDFW cougar management strategies when not coordinated with WDFW

In the absence of timely reporting to WDFW:

- The landowner affected is not given the service they deserve on correctly determining the cause of the livestock death, the best course of action, or how to prevent a repeat occurrence.
- WDFW is unable to assess the situation and provide expert staff support to assist landowners with husbandry solutions and deterrents, as well as non-lethal alternatives.
- WDFW is unable to perform an investigation and confirm if a cougar predated upon the animal, a requirement for livestock owners to be compensated for losses.
- WDFW is unable to collect valuable biological samples and demographic data from the removed animals. These data are used to assess how removals affect the cougar population age and sex structure.



# Recommendations

- Where there is no imminent threat to public safety, WDFW should be the primary responder and lead on responses to dangerous wildlife reports.
- WDFW continue to offer and provide training and resources to local law enforcement.
- Support WDFW's continued efforts to expand outreach and education with the public to reduce wildlife conflict, as well as increase capacity to respond.

# Questions

