Cougar Hunting Seasons and Regulations WAC 220-415-100

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Background

- The changes we are proposing only relate to cougars hunting in the Blue Mountains Game Management Units (GMU)
- The proposal is intended to reduce cougar density to increase elk calf survival
Background

- Three Population Management Units (PMUs) within the Blue Mountains area; comprised of 13 GMUs.
At-risk assessment
Calf mortality

• 3 core GMUs continue to decline due to poor calf survival
• Calf survival is too low to reverse the decline
• Main cause of poor calf survival is predation
• Main predator is cougar
To improve elk calf survival, we must address predation.

Among the options to address predation is to reduce the resident cougar population within the affected PMUs.
Proposed changes

- Editorial change under section (2)
  - Add the PMU number to each hunt area in the WAC

- Allow an individual to harvest a second cougar per license year in PMUs 9, 10, and 11 (Blue Mountains). (Section (4)(b))
Proposed changes

- A second tag will be required to harvest a second cougar
- The second tag will be valid only for PMUs 9, 10, and 11 (Blue Mountains)
Anticipated effects

- Reduced cougar density in the short term
- Increased calf survival
- Continued monitoring of cougar harvest
- Continue monitoring of calf survival
- Assess the efficacy of this proposed action if adopted
Summary

The proposed change to cougar hunting season and regulations

• Supports the mandate of the department, the commission, and the director
• Allows the department to use recreational hunters as a management tool
• Supports conservation of wildlife
Over 550 comments through:

- Online survey
- Letters (electronic, several form letters)
- Emails
- FWC briefing
Public Comment

- Comments received from individuals, organizations, and groups of organizations

- In addition to public comment, the department received comments from our Tribal co-managers
Public Comment

Common Themes –

• Support the proposal as stated
• Suggest a longer season / increased guidelines
• Desire for use of hounds / raffle hunts / other tools: bait, electronic calls etc.
• Suggest WDFW staff & contractors implement removals
• Desire for increased bear & cougar hunt opportunities / more areas
Public Comment

Common Themes -

- Oppose hunting, increasing cougar harvest or cougar hunting
- Oppose focus on predators
- Desire for review of elk herd objective, supplemental feeding of elk, and other factors effecting the elk population
- Desire for further evaluation of habitat and effects of climate change
- Suggest cougar harvest is already in excess of 12-16%
Public Comment

Additional Comments:

• WDFW needs to advise – they are the experts
• Desire more information to clearly explain the situation
• Concern the 2\textsuperscript{nd} tag is not enough to assist the elk herd
Recommendation: WAC 220-415-100

- Request to consider a motion

Motion Language:

I move to adopt the recommended rule changes as presented by Department staff.

Is there a “second”?