

# Cougar Focus Group

Report to the Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife

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November 18, 2022



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## Abstract

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) created the Cougar Focus Group (CFG), a group made up of seven members representing seven different stakeholder communities, to identify through dialogue a range of recommendations on how WDFW could enhance its public outreach, education, and engagement programs to reduce the risk of negative human-cougar interactions.

This report includes two sections:

- **Project Narrative:** This section describes the background information of the Cougar Focus Group's process and purpose.
- **Recommended Actions and Dialogue:** This section outlines the recommended actions, organized into three audience types: small-scale livestock owners, large-scale livestock owners, and recreationists.

# Cougar Focus Group Final Report

## Background Information

In January 2022, WDFW created the CFG to assist in the revision of WDFW strategies by reviewing proposal and products that were related to managing human-cougar conflicts. After conducting an initial assessment of member interests, WDFW tasked this group with developing a range of recommendations for how WDFW could enhance its public outreach, education, and engagement programs to reduce the risk of negative human-cougar interactions. WDFW asked the group to make specific recommendations for how to better engage with small-scale livestock owners, large-scale livestock owners, and recreation communities. WDFW hired Triangle Associates (facilitation team) to organize and facilitate four CFG meetings.

## Membership

To facilitate diversity among CFG members, WDFW sent a brief questionnaire to interested parties. A group of WDFW staff created an evaluation spreadsheet and rubric to evaluate each potential members' questionnaire responses. The following members were chosen to participate in the group:

### **Cougar Focus Group Members**

- Mark Elbroch, Panthera (Research Community)
- Greg Jones, Professional Wildlife Working Dogs (Interaction Response Community)
- Rachel Wendling/Nicole Masih-Theberge, Washington Trails Association (WTA) (Recreation Community) \*
- Marie Neumiller, Inland Northwest Wildlife Council (Hunting Community)
- Dan Paul, Humane Society (Preservation Community)
- Josh Rosenau, Mountain Lion Foundation (Conservation Community)
- Dave West, Klickitat County Farm Bureau Board (Livestock/Agriculture Community)

*\*WTA was originally represented by Rachel Wendling. In October 2022, Nicole replaced Rachel in representing the recreation community*

### **WDFW Team**

The following WDFW staff represented the agency during CFG meetings:

- James Brown
- Samantha Montgomery
- Stephanie Simek
- Maci Todd
- Becky Elder
- Kyla West

## Cougar Focus Group Setup

Before CFG Meeting One, WDFW and the facilitation team took several steps to set up the CFG for success and to develop a workplan.

## **Situational Assessment**

Before CFG Meeting One, the facilitation team conducted a third-party situational assessment by holding one-on-one interviews with each CFG member. The purpose was to establish a working relationship with each member and collect input about their interests, concerns, and questions regarding human-cougar conflict management. The facilitation team also asked members questions about the purpose of the CFG and gathered input about how the facilitation team and WDFW could best organize meetings.

The final version of the Situational Assessment Report is located in [Appendix B](#) of this report.

## **CFG Setup Deliverables**

CFG members were provided the following materials for project setup and planning:

- *CFG Operating Protocols*: This document outlined the CFG's purpose, membership, member duties, WDFW's role in the CFG, the facilitation team's role, the CFG's decision-making power, ground rules, and other participation principles.
- *CFG Work Plan*: This living document tracked the discussion topics for CFG Meetings One through Four.
- *Facilitators Assessment Report*: This document outlined the third-party situational assessment and compiled what the CFG reported into a cohesive, anonymous report. Triangle delivered this to WDFW to help guide CFG meeting agendas.

## **Summary of Meetings**

The CFG met four times between April and November 2022. CFG Meetings One through Three took place online using Microsoft Teams and CFG Meeting Four took place in-person in Ellensburg, Washington. Meetings lasted between 4 and 6 hours.

### **CFG Meeting One: April 13, 2022**

The meeting purpose was to (1) clarify the scope and purpose of the CFG and establish operating protocols, (2) brainstorm goals for outreach and education and how it could be improved statewide, and (3) review existing WDFW outreach materials for further discussion at CFG Meeting Two.

CFG Meeting One set the stage for other meetings in that the group recommended focusing on outreach and education recommendations for three audiences: small-scale livestock owners, large-scale livestock owners, and recreationists. A summary of CFG Meeting One is provided in [Appendix C](#).

### **CFG Meeting Two: June 6, 2022**

The meeting purpose was to (1) review WDFW's proposed work plan and goals, (2) review goal statements that CFG members identified at CFG Meeting One, (3) review outreach materials provided by WDFW for feedback, and (4) determine challenges and identify actions to improve education and outreach for small-scale livestock owners.

During the meeting, members also brainstormed a list of actions that WDFW could take to improve outreach and education to small-scale livestock owners. A summary of CFG Meeting Two is provided in [Appendix C](#).

### **CFG Meeting Three: September 27, 2022**

The meeting purpose was to (1) continue the roundtable discussion on small-scale livestock owners' education and outreach programs and (2) begin roundtable review of recommendations to improve recreation communities' and large-scale livestock owners education and outreach programs.

During the meeting, members discussed state policy regarding lethal removal and what actions the state takes after a depredation or other type of conflict occurs. Members discussed the need for a clear policy approach regarding non-lethal and lethal removal of cougars and agreed that WDFW should improve its policy and communication approach to the public. The group agreed that the communications messaging and the policies that underpin WDFW incident and call response need to be closely aligned.

Members also discussed the benefits and drawbacks of California's policy on cougar removal, indicating that there should be non-lethal options for removing cougars. Some members indicated support for WDFW moving toward a policy modeled after California because of the policy's observed clarity. It was noted that in California, there must be multiple incidences and the state must take multiple intervention options before lethal removal. Others suggested that WDFW should take on a policy that allows for more flexibility than California, that WDFW needs flexibility to respond to a variety of incidents types, and that WDFW should publicly communicate its existing steps to address incidents.

WDFW also reviewed their recreation community outreach approach, highlighting that cougar awareness signs at trailheads are used frequently to educate the public. WDFW identified a challenge in engagement with the non-consumptive recreation communities compared to its engagement with the hunting and fishing communities.

Members also discussed WDFW's current approach to engaging with large-scale livestock owners and WDFW indicated that local information sharing relies mostly on regional WDFW wildlife conflict specialists. The group discussed the challenges associated with reporting. Members indicated that because large-scale livestock owners have more land, depredation discovery is often too slow to identify the cause.

A summary of CFG Meeting Three is provided in [Appendix C](#).

#### **CFG Meeting Four: November 4, 2022**

The meeting purpose was to (1) discuss the risks associated with ungulate feeding and actions that could be taken to discourage risky feeding, including unintentional ungulate feeding in the form of bird feeder cast-off seeds and unharvested garden tree fruit, and recommendations for engaging landowners and (2) hold a final discussion regarding recommendations for improving education and outreach to the three target audiences. Members prioritized recommended actions that the group brainstormed during previous meetings via a dot exercise. Members then discussed what they considered to be top priority actions WDFW should take on over the next year.

All but one CFG member attended CFG Meeting Four in Ellensburg in person. Jim Brown, Sam Montgomery, and Maci Todd represented WDFW at CFG Meeting Four. This report serves as the summary for CFG Meeting Four.

### **Discussion on Existing Public Outreach Materials**

WDFW reviewed existing public outreach and education materials and how those materials are used. CFG members provided positive feedback on the assembly of public outreach and education materials. Members observed inconsistencies between the information WDFW field staff communicates to the

public and the agency's policy information regarding human-cougar conflict management conveyed in outreach material.

## Discussion on Ungulate Feeding

CFG members discussed ungulate feeding and a lack of awareness regarding the consequences, including poor health, and attracting predators such as cougars. The group discussed if WDFW should pursue a Revised Codes of Washington (RCW) to regulate ungulate feeding. Many indicated WDFW should take an education approach first, but acknowledged that an RCW may be needed to ensure compliance. Some members observed that drafting the RCW would require careful consideration to not unintentionally outlaw bird feeding. Other considerations for an RCW include effects on agriculture, animal health, animal food plots, and the enforceability of the RCW. Others suggested crafting the RCW from an animal welfare and public safety lens.

## Small-Scale Livestock Owners: Priority Action to Improve Education, Outreach, and Engagement

The group discussed options and priorities for improving education and outreach to small-scale livestock owners and reviewed the actions list that is included in the education and outreach table on [pages 11 – 15](#) of this document.

### Top Priority Actions

The group identified the following top priority actions:

1. Seek state funding to provide support to small-scale livestock owners building defensive structures for livestock that mitigate conflict with cougars on their property
2. Educate small-scale livestock owners about available tools (see tools listed below)
3. Publish statewide expectations for pre- and post-incident actions
4. Use incentives for corrective action by landowners first, followed by consequences if incentives do not result in a change of behavior and human-cougar conflict persists
5. Ensure field staff communicate a consistent message regarding WDFW policy and potential actions to take after a negative interaction

### Group Discussion

Later in CFG Meeting Four, the group identified that WDFW should prioritize outreach and engagement to small-scale livestock owners, because cougars typically interact with livestock and pets near owners' houses, relative to large-scale livestock owners' range land, where there are more opportunities for intervention.

Members discussed whether owners should be given the option to harvest an animal. Some members expressed concern that it might incentivize human conflict with cougars. All members expressed a concern that any cougar carcass be dealt with appropriately and data be collected from all carcasses. Members also discussed options if a person has a cougar tag and the season is open, and the need for clear communication on the rules surrounding harvesting an animal being removed with the use of hounds for depredation.

The group also discussed the need for clarity around how data is collected and who is collecting it (Enforcement versus Wildlife programs). One member indicated that it would be helpful to have wildlife

management and wildlife reporting data sets made available. One member expressed the importance of knowing what attracts cougars and recognizing that they are opportunistic.

### **Priority Actions by Topic Area**

Priorities, identified by a dot exercise, and dialogue are listed below. Priorities are separated by audience and are ranked from highest to lowest based on the number of stars the CFG members assigned to each action during CFG Meeting Four.

#### *Preventative Actions – Communications and Audiences*

1. Publish statewide expectations for pre- and post-incident actions (*four stars*)
2. Target communications/education for landowners new to the rural landscape and work with realtors and community welcome groups (*one star*)
3. Work with local utility companies to provide information on how life with wildlife is different in rural communities (*one star*)
4. Work with conservation districts to help distribute educational information (*one star*)
5. Communicate with Washington State University extension programs (*one star*)
6. Participate in local community classes (*one star*)
7. *NextDoor* outreach with accurate information (*one star*)
8. Hold seminars or symposiums funded by admission charges or fundraisers to create a collaborative space for specific groups to discuss how to support small-scale livestock owners (*one star*)
9. Hold “go to you” presentations with community organizations (*one star*)

#### *Preventative Actions – Capacity/Funding Support*

1. Seek state funding to provide funding support to small-scale livestock owners building defensive structures for livestock that mitigate conflict with cougars on their property (*six stars*)
2. Educate small-scale livestock owners about available tools (*five stars*)
  - a. Radios with on/off settings for audio deterrence
  - b. Remote camera systems
  - c. Post current programs on the WDFW website
  - d. Livestock guard dog training programs
  - e. Design specifications for livestock/pet fencing
3. Suggest low-cost alternatives to those who cannot always afford mitigation tools like fencing, and explain the costs of cougar removal (*one star*)
4. Design more robust mitigation plans with landowners (*one star*)

#### *Post Incident Response – Objectives*

1. Break the cycle of lethal removal post-incident (*one star*)
2. Clarify WDFW's approach to communicating how the state manages and responds to human-cougar conflict (*one star*)

#### *Post Incident Response – Policy*

1. Balance responsibility between state and livestock owners (*one star*)
2. Give landowners the option to decline lethal removal (*one star*)

#### *Post Incident Response – Communications*



1. Follow up with a landowner post-incident and bringing biologists in to speak with landowners (*one star*)
2. Include information about the ecological costs of removing cougars and communications with wildlife conflict specialists in high-density cougar areas (*one star*)
3. Clearly communicate what landowners can expect when state is handling incidents of human-cougar conflict (*one star*)

#### *Post Incident Response – Engagement and Enforcement*

1. Use incentives for corrective action first followed by consequences if incentives do not facilitate a change of behavior and human-cougar conflict persists (*three stars*)
2. Improve and prioritize post-incident response engagement with landowners, and specifically landowners in chronic conflict with *cougars* (*two stars*)
3. Consider what neighborhoods can do to prevent incidents, rather than focusing only on individual landowners, and ensuring that residents are aware of how their actions impact their neighbors in terms of human-cougar conflict (*one star*)

#### *Post Incident Response – Agency Internal Actions*

1. Ensure field staff are communicating a consistent message regarding WDFW policy and potential actions to take after a conflict (*three stars*)
2. Identify lessons learned and gaps in knowledge after each incident and conduct additional research (*two stars*)

## Large-Scale Livestock Owners: Priority Action to Improve Education, Outreach, and Engagement

The group discussed options and priorities for improving education, outreach, and engagement to large-scale livestock owners and reviewed the actions list that is included in the education and outreach table on [pages 11 – 15](#) of this document.

### **Top Priority Actions**

The group identified the following top priority actions:

1. Outreach to organizations (see below) to enhance the 1:1 engagement approach
2. Follow up with a landowner post-incident
3. Compensation should be available for cougar-incurred losses of sheep and cattle
4. Dialogue does not have to revolve around specific incidents

### **Group Discussion**

The group observed that one of the challenges with depredation for large-scale livestock owners is that owners' animals are often further afield on range land relative to small-scale livestock owners' animals who are likely closer to a home or humans. It was observed that if a death or depredation takes place, by the time it is discovered by the owner, agency, or other party, it is often hard to identify the cause (e.g., cougar kill, wolf kill, or other cause).

The group discussed various ways to improve education and outreach to large-scale livestock owners and concluded that improving outreach should focus on implementing changes to the existing program and that the goal should be to bring depredations as low as possible. Overall, principles and goals for

outreach to small-scale livestock owners are similar, but there are different methods of achieving them. The group also concluded that in general, WDFW's 1:1 engagement approach is working and although outreach to large-scale livestock owners is important and can be improved, WDFW should focus more on improving education and outreach to small-scale livestock owners because there are more tools available for small-scale livestock owners to decrease depredations.

Members observed that compensation funding is dependent on the depredating species and that legislative funding appropriations for wolf depredations are often prioritized over cougars. The group also discussed how Washington Administrative Codes for depredation compensation were inconsistent and unclear and that WDFW often has money left over because of limitations in the laws. The group observed that the compensation program could be streamlined and that more policy communication to landowners could be useful.

### **Priority Actions By Topic Area**

Priorities, as identified by a dot exercise, and dialogue are listed below. Priorities are separated by audience and are ranked from highest to lowest based on number of stars the CFG members assigned to each action during CFG Meeting Four.

#### *Large-Scale Livestock Owners Compensation for loss*

1. Follow up with a landowner post-incident (*five stars*)
2. Compensation should be available for cougar-incurred losses of sheep and cattle (*three stars*)
3. Identify lessons learned and gaps in knowledge after each incident (*two stars*)

#### *Large-Scale Livestock Owners Communications and Outreach*

1. Outreach to the following organizations to enhance the 1:1 engagement approach (*six stars*)
  - a. Farm Bureau
  - b. Local Governments
  - c. Cattlemen Groups
  - d. Washington Department of Agriculture
  - e. Local law enforcement agencies and animal control
2. Dialogue does not have to revolve around specific incidents (*three stars*)
3. Support livestock owner peer-to-peer communication about deterrence (*two stars*)

#### *Large-Scale Livestock Owners Data Collection*

1. Statistics about cougars should be accurate and backed up by field work, and statistics should include communications regarding accuracy/uncertainty (*one star*)
2. Use radio ear tags to find mortalities faster (*one star*)
3. Find killed animals early enough to identify what killed the animal (*one star*)
4. Explore why there are currently more cougar observations in some parts of Washington (*one star*)

## **Recreation Communities: Priority Action to Improve Education, Outreach, and Engagement**

The group discussed options and priorities for improving education, outreach, and engagement for recreation communities and reviewed the actions list that was included in the education and outreach table on [pages 11 – 15](#) of this document.

## Top Priority Actions

The group identified the following top priority actions:

1. Outreach signage at trailheads and public lands statewide, such as at Washington State Parks and other agencies' public access points.
2. Partner outreach with different recreation community organizations (e.g., with WTA)

The group discussed an observed challenge in connecting with a diverse and unorganized recreation community. WDFW indicated they have decades of experience engaging with hunting and fishing communities and can improve targeting and engaging with other recreation communities.

The group suggested working with partner organizations, such as WTA, to host expert panels or webinars regarding cougar and other wildlife safety tips and to post cougar-specific information in hiking guides or in relation to specific areas in the state where negative interactions maybe of higher concern.

The group recommended WDFW prioritize cougar and animal safety information messaging at trailheads statewide. One member suggested that cougar safety signage should be available in English and Spanish.

Members discussed how to help humans connect with cougars. Some suggested WDFW develop a Washington wildlife film featuring specific cougars while avoiding anthropomorphizing cougars in a manner that portrays cougars as "cute and fuzzy," potentially incentivizing dangerous behavior around wildlife.

The group discussed how to educate tourists in rural areas who may encounter cougars. WDFW has inquired and learned that it cannot directly engage with individual *AirBnb* owners, but one possibility is developing a standard resource such as a cougar safety magnet to provide to all *AirBnb* owners. Some members observed that while outreach to tourists is worthwhile, WDFW should focus outreach to people who spend the most time in cougar country, such as small-scale livestock owners and property owners who have recently moved to a rural environment.

## Priority Actions By Topic Area

Priorities, as identified by a dot exercise, and dialogue are listed below. Priorities are separated by audience and are ranked from highest to lowest based on number of stars the CFG assigned to each action during CFG Meeting Four.

### *Recreationists General Cougar Outreach*

- Outreach signage at trailheads and public lands statewide, such as at Washington State Parks (*three stars*)
- Make people aware they are in cougar country; when doing this, avoid framing cougars as a problem (*two stars*)
- Provide "Cougar 101" course framework that celebrates cougars and teaches recreationists basic facts (*one star*)
- Outreach to various recreation groups (23 – 35) regarding tips for what to do upon a cougar sighting (*one star*)
- Basic wildlife facts (example, videos) targeted at the general public in schools, classrooms
- Consider how to make outreach work for specific audiences (*one star*)

### *Recreationists Education Through Partner Organizations*

- All state agencies, not just WDFW, should participate in outreach to change cultural perceptions about wildlife (*two stars*)

- Consistent message at trailheads statewide (*two stars*)
- Q&A with expert on cougars for WTA audiences (*one star*)

*Recreationists Business/Tourism Outreach*

- Outreach to recreation retailers for information about cougar safety at point of sale (*one star*)

*Recreationists Education regarding perception of cougars*

- Communicate positive experience and the chance/risk of a negative human-cougar interaction (*two stars*)

## CFG Meeting Four Action Items

Action Item	Responsibility
Send WDFW notes regarding the ungulate feeding work group.	Dan Paul
Send WDFW data on small prey that might attract younger cougars.	Mark Elbroch
Follow up with WDFW about possible policy initiatives that could be tackled immediately, including funding support options for small-scale livestock owners.	Mark Elbroch and Jim Brown

*\*This section on CFG Meeting Four includes action items because the CFG Final Report also serves as the meeting summary for CFG Meeting Four.*

## Appendix A: CFG Education and Outreach Table

Current Program Assessment	Recommended Actions – Current Outreach Program for General Audience
<p><b>Existing Outreach Material</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Members observed that the public outreach and education materials are well put together.</li> <li>2. Members observed inconsistencies with the information WDFW field staff communicate to members of the public on the ground and the information and agency policy regarding human-cougar conflict management that is conveyed in the outreach material.</li> <li>3. Members observed it is good that social media messages do not have a fear-oriented message.</li> </ol>	<p><b>Celebrate the presence of cougars on the landscape</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Message the role that cougars and other predators play in the ecosystem</li> <li>2. Rely on passionate experts to present about how to reduce negative human-cougar interactions in schools</li> <li>3. Utilize creative media such as trail cameras and create an avenue for the public/students to study cougar; ensure that any video use to monitor/celebrate cougars does not violate fair chase rules or put the cougar in danger</li> <li>4. Co-host information booths at local and county fairs with partner organizations</li> <li>5. Discuss cougars without attaching a negative connotation</li> <li>6. Organize citizen science cougar programs</li> <li>7. Maintain a collaborative effort to keep legislative support for outreach funding</li> </ol> <p><b>Inform the public about potential threats and mitigating actions they could take to reduce the risk of negative human-cougar interactions by:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8. Customize social media messages so that they are shareable on multiple platforms</li> <li>9. Emphasize the rarity of negative human-cougar interactions</li> <li>10. Develop regional specific cougar education</li> <li>11. Educate the public about topics including:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Impacts (or lack thereof) of cougars on ungulates</li> <li>b. Use of working guard animals</li> </ol> </li> <li>12. Educate the public in the following areas:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Law enforcement education/outreach</li> <li>b. Hunter education courses</li> </ol> </li> <li>13. Articulate the holistic cost of removing cougars from the ecosystem and resulting effects on local communities</li> </ol> <p><b>Provide media basic science information about cougars and human-cougar interactions</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>14. Customize social media messages for certain audiences and platforms</li> <li>15. Create a science-based predator fact sheet (look to Florida as an example) to provide to media</li> <li>16. Make information from WDFW accessible to specific audiences and easy to find on the WDFW website; This could include:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Outreach to low-income audiences</li> </ol> </li> <li>17. Provide Science Communications             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Scientific review of options outlining what does and does not work</li> <li>b. Connect existing understanding of animal behavior to the behavior of wild animals</li> </ol> </li> <li>18. Invest in gathering more data on the effectiveness of moving cougars</li> <li>19. Train the media on how to provide factual messages about negative human-cougar interactions</li> </ol>

Current Program Assessment - Small-scale Live-stock Owners	Recommended Actions - Small-scale Live-stock Owners
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. There is a disconnect between policy and what field staff are telling landowners about cougar removal</li> <li>2. Livestock owner’s anecdotal experience working with wildlife conflict specialists is generally good</li> </ol>	<p><b>Preventative Actions</b></p> <p><i>Communications and Audiences</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Publish statewide expectations for pre- and post-incident actions <b>(six stars)</b></li> <li>2. Target communications/education for landowners new to the rural landscape <b>(one star)</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Work with realtors</li> <li>b. Work with community welcome groups</li> </ol> </li> <li>3. Work with local utility companies to provide information on how life with wildlife is different in rural communities <b>(one star)</b></li> <li>4. Work with conservation districts to help distribute educational information <b>(one star)</b></li> <li>5. Communicate with community welcome groups to educate newcomers <b>(one star)</b></li> <li>6. Communicate with Washington State University extension programs <b>(one star)</b></li> <li>7. Participate in local community classes <b>(one star)</b></li> <li>8. <i>NextDoor</i> outreach with accurate information <b>(one star)</b></li> <li>9. Use a neighborhood approach – Engage and communicate with neighboring landowners to ensure consistent action is being taken to reduce the risk of negative interactions among neighbors and cougars</li> <li>10. Hold seminars or symposiums funded by admission charges or fundraisers to create a collaborative space for specific groups to discuss how to support small-scale livestock owners <b>(one star)</b></li> <li>11. Partner with organizations such as Panthera, Mountain Lion Foundation, and the Working Dogs Foundation to educate the public about deterrence strategies</li> <li>12. Hold “go to you” presentations with community organizations <b>(one star)</b></li> </ol> <p><i>Capacity/Funding Support</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>13. Educate small-scale livestock owners about available tools <b>(5 stars)</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Radios with on/off settings for audio deterrence</li> <li>b. Remote camera systems</li> <li>c. Post current programs on the WDFW website</li> <li>d. Livestock guard dog training programs</li> <li>e. Design specifications for livestock/pet fencing</li> </ol> </li> <li>14. Suggest low-cost alternatives to those who cannot always afford mitigation tools like fencing and balance the costs of cougar removal <b>(one star)</b></li> <li>15. Provide information on how to best train livestock guard dogs</li> </ol>

- 16. Design more robust mitigation plans with landowners **(one star)**
- 17. Communicate how ineffective llamas are for deterring cougars
- 18. Seek State funding to provide funding support to small-scale livestock owners taking mitigation action through a conservation lens on their property **(six stars)**
  - a. Find legislative champions to encourage bi-partisan support to advocate for funding support
  - b. Find budget neutral ways to deal with cougar issues
  - c. Use state funding infrastructure (e.g., the Recreation and Conservation Office) to administer funding
- 19. Partner with non-profits who could provide funding support to small-scale livestock owners taking mitigation action on their property
- 20. Encourage local governments (cities and counties) to fund action on private lands

*Ungulate Feeding*

- 21. WDFW would need RCWs to regulate feeding. RCW considerations could include:
  - a. Bird feeding
  - b. Agriculture
  - c. Animal health focus
  - d. Food plots
  - e. Enforceability
  - f. Public safety
  - g. Local government enforcement.
- 22. Funding for education regarding ungulate feeding
- 23. Goal: increase contact capacity
- 24. A previous working group has addressed issues associated with ungulate feeding

**Post-Incident Response**

*Objectives*

- 25. Clarify WDFW's approach to communicating how the state manages and responds to human-cougar conflict **(one star)**
- 26. Break the cycle of lethal removal post-intendent **(one star)**

*Policy*

- 27. Use California Policy as a model: Prior to lethal removal, only consider lethal removal after multiple incidences and multiple steps have been taken to prevent conflict
- 28. Retain flexibility to deal with individual incidences and use lethal removal if needed (i.e., more flexibility than is offered in the California policy)

- 29. Provide necessary support to livestock owners after an incident
- 30. Balance responsibility between state and livestock owners **(one star)**
- 31. Give landowners the option to decline lethal removal **(one star)**
- 32. Have clear policy guidance on cougar removal
  - a. Clearly delineate between cougar removal and hunting policies

*Communications*

- 33. Clearly communicate the immediate social benefits and longer-term risks of lethal removal to landowners
- 34. Follow up with a landowner post-incident and bringing biologists in to speak with landowners **(one star)**
- 35. Include information about the ecological costs of removing cougars and communications with wildlife conflict specialists in high-density cougar areas **(one star)**
- 36. Clearly communicate what landowners can expect when state is handling incidents of human-cougar conflict **(one star)**
- 37. Be transparent about how first time and repeat offenders are handled
- 38. Engage and communicate with neighboring landowners to ensure

*Engagement and Enforcement*

- 39. Improve and prioritize post-incident response engagement with landowners, and specifically landowners in chronic conflict with cougars **(two stars)**
- 40. Ensure landowners have some agency when engaging with them about handling negative human-cougar interactions
- 41. Perform regular one-on-one follow-up with landowners post-conflict
- 42. Use incentives for corrective action first followed by consequences if incentives do not facilitate a change of behavior and human-cougar conflict persists **(three stars)**
  - a. Incentive: Grants for landowners that support corrective action
  - b. Incentive: Voucher program to provide support with corrective actions that landowners can take
- 43. Consider what neighborhoods can do to prevent incidents, rather than focusing only on individual landowners, and ensuring that residents are aware of how their actions impact their neighbors in terms of human-cougar conflict **(one star)**

*Agency Internal Actions*

- 44. Identify lessons learned and gaps in knowledge after each incident **(two stars)**
- 45. Ensure field staff are communicating a consistent message regarding WDFW policy and potential actions to take after a conflict **(three stars)**



Current Program Assessment - Large-scale Livestock Owners	Recommended Actions - Large-scale Livestock Owners
<p><b>What is working:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. WDFW’s current approach to distributing information about cougars</li> <li>2. WDFW’s current focus on carcass removal (attractants)</li> <li>3. Livestock guardian dog program</li> </ol> <p><b>What is not working and what WDFW can do more of:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. There is more funding for wolf loss and mitigation than there is for loss and conflict mitigation with cougars</li> <li>5. Outreach to large-scale livestock owners can be difficult: Many owners are independent and skeptical of the government</li> <li>6. One population control challenge is that not all cougars are offenders and often time offending cougars are opportunistic</li> <li>7. Reports available on the WDFW website do not reveal if an incident is caused by a problem cougar</li> <li>8. Volunteer reporting can be challenging due to peer pressure and social influence</li> <li>9. There is not enough data on losses</li> </ol>	<p><b>Compensation of large-scale livestock owners for loss</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Follow up with a landowner post-incident <b>(five stars)</b></li> <li>2. Compensation should be available for cougar-incurred losses of sheep and cattle <b>(three stars)</b></li> <li>3. Identify lessons learned and gaps in knowledge after each incident <b>(two stars)</b></li> </ol> <p><b>Communications and Outreach</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Focus mitigation actions at the cougar population level given how difficult it is to identify if a loss is due to an individual cougar; some members expressed concern with this approach because not all cougars are offenders and often time offending cougars are opportunistic</li> <li>5. Support livestock owner peer-to-peer communication about deterrence <b>(two stars)</b></li> <li>6. Dialogue does not have to revolve around specific incidents <b>(three stars)</b></li> <li>7. Target the timing of outreach with higher risk situations</li> <li>8. Outreach to the following organizations: <b>(six stars)</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Farm Bureau</li> <li>b. Local Governments</li> <li>c. Cattlemen Groups</li> <li>d. WA Department of Agriculture</li> <li>e. Local Law Enforcement agencies and animal control</li> </ol> </li> <li>9. Support for funding for mitigation on private lands.</li> </ol> <p><b>Improve Data Collection</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10. Statistics about cougars should be accurate and backed up by field work, and statistics should include communications regarding accuracy/uncertainty <b>(one star)</b></li> <li>11. Explore how to identify the source of loss sooner <b>(one star)</b></li> <li>12. Perform research at a small scale</li> <li>13. Use models to observe and identify confidence in what caused a loss <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Example: Bayesian approach to modeling</li> <li>b. Look to approaches used to gather data on wolves</li> </ol> </li> <li>14. Use drones to observe cougars and livestock</li> <li>15. Use radio ear tags to find mortalities faster <b>(one star)</b></li> <li>16. Explore why there are currently more cougar observations in some parts of Washington</li> </ol>

	<p>17. Find killed animals early enough to identify cause of death <b>(one star)</b></p> <p>18. Increase resource support to landowners so that data can help landowners find who is responsible.</p>
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Current Program Assessment - Recreation Community	Recommended Actions - Recreation Community
<p><b>Current WDFW recreation focused outreach and education:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. WDFW has decades of experience engaging with the hunting &amp; fishing communities and less experience/connections to the non-consumptive recreation communities (i.e., hiking, biking, nature viewing, etc.)</li> </ol>	<p><b>General Cougar Outreach might include:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Make people aware they are in cougar country; When doing this, avoid framing cougars as a problem <b>(two stars)</b></li> <li>2. Consider how to reach people that don't think of themselves as needing information</li> <li>3. Produce video material about basic wildlife behavior that includes guidelines for youth and newcomers</li> <li>4. Provide more outreach in schools</li> <li>5. Provide "Cougar 101" course framework that celebrates cougars and teaches recreationists basic facts <b>(one star)</b></li> <li>6. Outreach at trailheads and lands managed by Washington State Parks <b>(three stars)</b></li> <li>7. Outreach to various recreation groups (21-33) regarding tips for what to do upon cougar sighting <b>(one star)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Consistent messaging at trail heads statewide</li> <li>o Partner</li> </ul> </li> <li>8. Define who is measuring effectiveness/success</li> <li>9. Basic wildlife facts (e.g., videos) targeted at the general public in schools and classrooms <b>(one star)</b></li> <li>10. Consider how to make outreach work <b>(one star)</b></li> <li>11. Define what successful outreach looks like</li> </ol> <p><b>Education through partner organizations</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>12. Consider the common questions that WDFW staff receive at sporting shows and events</li> <li>13. Identify recreation organizations to partner with and provide them with shareable information</li> <li>14. All state agencies, not just WDFW, should participate in outreach to change cultural perceptions about wildlife <b>(two stars)</b></li> <li>15. Q&amp;A with experts on cougars for WTA audiences <b>(one star)</b></li> <li>16. Reach out to the Washington State Parks and other state/county landowners to increase the number of trail head designs and information on trailhead boards</li> <li>17. Strive for positive connections</li> </ol> <p><b>Business/Tourism outreach</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>18. Outreach to Airbnb hosts and hotels in areas where cougars are common <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Could include an informational magnet at host locations</li> </ul> </li> <li>19. Outreach to recreation retailers for information about cougar safety at point of sale <b>(one star)</b></li> </ol> <p><b>Education regarding perception of cougars</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>20. Assess risk relative to past experiences</li> <li>21. Communicate positive experience and the chance/risk of a negative human-cougar interaction <b>(two stars)</b></li> </ol>

	<p>22. Find ways to relate cougars to people. Some members expressed concern with this approach and with anthropomorphizing cougars</p> <p><b>Engage the following audiences</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>23. Trail runners</li><li>24. Recreation newcomers</li><li>25. Mountain bikers</li><li>26. Vacation renters and rural visitors</li><li>27. Hunters</li><li>28. Anglers</li><li>29. Hikers</li><li>30. Backpackers</li><li>31. Rock climbers</li><li>32. Wildlife viewers (web camera operators)</li><li>33. Retailers (REI, Cabela's)</li><li>34. Mountaineers and other recreation groups</li><li>35. Recreate Responsibly Coalition</li></ul>
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## Appendix B: Situational Assessment Report

**Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife  
Cougar Focus Group  
DRAFT Situational Assessment Report  
v.3/17/2022**

Prepared by Triangle Associates

### **I. Background**

The Cougar Focus Group (CFG) will provide input for specific human-cougar management topics and issues as assigned by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW). Group members include external stakeholders who will provide a broad range of perspectives through discussion to help inform WDFW's approach to reducing negative human-cougar interactions.

In January of 2022, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) hired Triangle Associates (Triangle), a neutral 3<sup>rd</sup> party, to facilitate and help plan for four CFG meetings throughout 2022.

To identify a diverse membership group, WDFW sent a questionnaire to interested parties and evaluated responses based on a previously established rubric. Candidates from each interest group with the highest score were selected. Interest groups include:

- |  |                         |
|--|-------------------------|
| 1. Hunter Organization                   | 4. Interaction response |
| 2. Environmental Conservation            | 5. Research             |
| 3. Livestock/large and small agriculture | 6. Recreation           |
|  | 7. Preservation         |

### **II. Situational Assessment Purpose**

After WDFW identified members for the CFG, the Triangle facilitation team conducted a third-party situational assessment by holding one-on-one interviews with each member of the CFG. The purpose was to establish a working relationship with each CFG member and collect input about their interests, concerns, and questions regarding human-cougar conflict management. Triangle also answered questions about the purpose of the CFG and gathered input on how Triangle and the Coordination Team can best organize CFG Meetings. Triangle interviewed the following CFG members.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1. Dan Paul, Humane Society                           | 5. Mark Elbroch, Panthera                         |
| 2. Rachel Wendling, Washington Trails Association     | 6. Greg Jones, Professional Wildlife Working Dogs |
| 3. Dave West, Klickitat County Farm Bureau Board      | 7. Josh Rosenau, Mountain Lion Foundation         |
| 4. Marie Neumiller, Inland Northwest Wildlife Council |   |



### **III. Themes and Key Insights from CFG Members**

#### ***Overarching Goals and Interests Regarding Humans and Cougars***

Triangle heard the following themes during the situational assessment.

- All members expressed a desire for humans and cougars to co-exist.
- All members indicated that education strategies could be improved to reduce negative human-cougar conflicts.
- Many members reported that a challenge is communicating to the public the relative risk that cougars pose to humans and domestic animals and what is safe or risky human behavior in cougar habitat (i.e., when hiking or choosing different types of pet or wildlife fencing). Members offered examples of where public perception has resulted in overly fearful responses to actual cougar-related risk, and conversely where it has resulted in increased risk due to underestimation of the threats and how to mitigate them.
- Multiple members indicated that negative human-cougar interactions need to be understood in context, and that increased human populations in cougar habitats is one factor.
- Many members suggested that more information and science is needed regarding human-cougar interaction, along with the effects of other wildlife species and ecosystem conditions on cougar populations and behaviors. In order to reduce negative interactions, it is important to understand the larger picture and the state of the science.
- There were differing perspectives on the role of lethal removal of cougars, but all members indicated that proactive mitigation strategies could be improved and implemented to reduce the risk of negative conflicts and depredation.
- Most members expressed a goal of no depredations and achieving mutual safety between cougars and humans, recognizing that depredation could occur and that the fact that cougar's territory has expanded in recent years.

#### ***Education Opportunities***

Triangle heard from all CFG members there is a need to improve education and outreach strategies to reduce the risk of negative human-cougar conflict.

- Many members suggested educational products should be focused on how to encourage the coexistence of cougars and humans.
- Many members indicated that education and outreach strategies should address the public perception of cougars and help the public better understand what is a likely risk and what is an unlikely risk. It was noted that fear of cougars particularly affects landowners, livestock owners, and recreationists. One member suggested that more social science research into what makes people feel safe or unsafe in cougar habitat could be informative.



- Most members suggested that educational materials should be developed for the diverse audiences that may interact with cougars. Noted audiences included hikers/recreationalists, livestock owners (large and small), pet owners, rural and urban communities, and eastern and western Washington communities. It was noted these audiences often think differently about cougars, may encounter cougars in different ways, and thus the risks of a negative human-cougar interaction vary.
- Some members also suggested it is important to educate diverse audiences about the concerns and experiences of other communities who encounter cougars.
- Some members suggested that outreach and education materials could include:
  - A shared communication plan and strategy which bolsters multiple organization's ability to educate their constituents about how to coexist with cougars.
  - A common location for information and agreed upon science regarding cougars, their role in the ecosystem, and the risks they do and do not pose to humans.
  - Material developed and distributed by WDFW in consideration of various public audiences.
- Many members suggested livestock/animal owners need to be educated on how they can repel cougars from their property and on the state programs available to support private mitigation actions.
  - Some members indicated that large scale and small-scale livestock owners, as well as pet owners, have different needs and resources and therefore they need different tools or need to take different actions to reduce the risk of a negative interaction with a cougar.
  - It was also noted that outreach messaging around mitigation strategies/programs should be targeted in consideration of both rural livestock owners and urban pet owners. One member indicated that large livestock owners who depended on livestock for income could use additional support.

### ***Success for the CFG Process and Meetings***

All members expressed a desire for constructive dialogue with WDFW and other interest groups during CFG meetings. Members' feedback on this topic is organized into the categories of Outcomes, Relationships, and Decision Making.

- *Outcomes*
  - Some members indicated that while dialogue is important in the CFG, it must also result in action which creates a tangible outcome that will benefit constituents.
  - Some members indicated that greater clarity around tasks is needed to ensure the CFG is a good use of members' time. There should be clear action linked to every meeting.
- *Relationships*



- Some members shared that relationship building between member organizations would be a successful outcome of the process. It was noted that relationship building is important to achieve a mutual understanding of differing experiences and interests regarding human-cougar conflict and coexistence. One member suggested in-person meetings could contribute to the success of the CFG if allowable.
- *Decision-Making*
  - A few CFG members asked about the role of the CFG in decision-making. One member suggested the CFG and WDFW discuss a process for shared decision-making regarding cougar management in the state so that constituents feel they have a voice at the table. This member suggested that WDFW use the U.S. Geologic Survey's Structured Decision-Making framework.

### ***Suggested Discussion Topics for CFG Meetings***

Members identified the following discussion topics as important to the issue of cougar – human conflict reduction and cougar management.

- Capacity building for agencies and member organizations for development of educational resources targeted at specific audiences.
- Discussion on trends in the ecosystem that affect Cougars and a review of available science, including the Predator-Prey Study, Kalispel Cougar Deterrence Study, and the Blue Mountain Elk Study, and identification of future study needs. A review could inform action on reducing depredation.
- The allocation of state funding for proactive mitigation and risk reduction on private land and response action after a human-cougar conflict. One member noted there should be more public money to support proactive actions and current funding structure is focused primarily addressing problems after they occur.
- Habitat connectivity and pressures on Cougars that may increase human-cougar encounters/conflict.
- Preventing depredation.
- Defensive monitoring tools.
- The Cougar Harvest Management Plan including hunting quotes and ways to hunt cougars sustainably while recognizing that they are part of the ecosystem.

### ***Questions from CFG Members***

As indicated above, some members expressed questions about the purpose of the CFG and what WDFW will ask the group to consider and what the agency hopes to achieve. These members indicated it is not clear how the CFG's input will inform action.





#### IV. Facilitator Recommendations

##### ***Maintain CFG Meeting Work Plan***

The facilitation team and WDFW should develop and maintain a meeting work plan laying out potential discussion topics and prompts for a series of meetings so that members know generally what the range of topics will include and, importantly, not include. During the assessment, multiple members asked about the topics that will be discussed. It is recommended this work plan is a living document to track topics for discussion, plan out the series of meeting and inform agendas, and is reviewed/updated at and after each CFG meeting.

##### ***Clarify How the CFG will Inform WDFW Decision-Making***

To help CFG members understand how their input will be used, the first meeting agenda should include time for WDFW to clearly communicate and answer questions about how the CFG will inform its decision-making. Clarify that the intention is not for the CFG to develop consensus recommendations but rather have a round table dialogue on various human-cougar conflict management topics so that WDFW staff can hear a range of perspectives. It is recommended that the facilitation team support WDFW in this discussion by showing where this process falls on the [IAP2 spectrum of public participation](#).

## Appendix C: CFG Meetings One through Three Meeting Summaries

**Cougar Focus Group (CFG)**  
**Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) CFG Meeting 1**  
**April 13, 2022 | 1:00 – 4:00 p.m.**

FINAL Meeting Summary v.5.20.22

### **Meeting Purpose:**

- Clarify scope and purpose of CFG and establish Operating Protocols
- Brainstorm goals for outreach and education and how it could be improved statewide
- Discuss Assignment 1 – Review existing outreach material for further discussion at meeting two

### **Meeting Attendees**

#### **CFG Members**

- Mark Elbroch (Research Community)
- Greg Jones (Interaction Response Community)
- Marie Neumiller (Hunting Community)
- Dan Paul (Preservation Community)
- Josh Rosenau (Conservation Community)
- Rachel Wendling (Recreation Community)
- Dave West (Livestock/Agriculture Community)

#### **WDFW Team**

- Anis Aoude
- Jim Brown
- Rebecca Elder
- Eric Gardner
- Deputy Chief Golden
- Samantha Montgomery
- Stephanie Simek
- Maci Todd

#### **Triangle Associates (Triangle)**

- Thomas Christian
- Jacob Hibbeln

### **Action Items**

<b>Action Item</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Suggested Timeline</b>
Create a work plan for future meetings based on the topics the CFG discussed.	Triangle	As soon as possible.
Send all updated outreach materials to CFG Members.	Triangle & WDFW	As soon as possible.
Send a Doodle poll to schedule the next CFG meeting in June.	Triangle	Complete.
Review outreach materials and be prepared to provide feedback at CFG Meeting 2.	CFG Members.	Before CFG Meeting 2 in June.
Send a draft meeting summary to the CFG team for review.	Triangle	Two weeks after the meeting.

### **Meeting Summary**

#### **Welcome and Introductions**

The facilitator explained that the meeting purpose was to clarify the scope and purpose of the Cougar Focus Group (CFG), establish Operating Protocols, brainstorm goals for outreach and education and how

it could be improved statewide, and to introduce Assignment 1. The WDFW Team introduced themselves, followed by each CFG member.

Eric Gardner, WDFW, explained the agency's intention in forming the CFG is to engage diverse constituencies in a dialog on how to reduce negative human-cougar interactions. Eric emphasized that reducing negative interactions requires partnerships and is a dynamic issue. Deputy Chief (D.C.) Golden, WDFW, also introduced himself and noted that relationships are important for issues such as reducing negative human-cougar interactions.

In response to a question about tribal representation, D.C. Golden explained that it would be inappropriate to involve any Tribes as stakeholders because they are sovereign nations and WDFW engages with Tribes in a government-to-government manner. Stephanie Simek, WDFW, added that WDFW is and will continue to work with Tribes on policy and on-the-ground actions.

### **Review Assessment Interview Findings**

The facilitator reviewed the Situational Assessment Report. CFG members noted appreciation for the report and made one grammatical correction. The facilitator requested CFG members review the report and send any comments within a week of the meeting. At that point the report would be considered final.

### **Review and Questions about WDFW CFG Charter, Scope, and Plan for Discussion Topics**

The facilitator reviewed the [spectrum of public participation](#) and explained how it related to the CFG.

Jim Brown, WDFW, explained the CFG is intended to be a diverse stakeholder group that advises WDFW through dialogue. Jim indicated that the CFG's purpose is to help WDFW fill a knowledge gap regarding how best to reduce negative human-cougar interactions. Jim indicated that the CFG is somewhere in between consult and involvement on the spectrum of public participation because the CFG's purpose is to provide information and share perspectives, but the CFG is not asked to develop consensus-based policy recommendations.

Jim also indicated that the CFG will not look at questions related to harvest levels and hunting quotas because these are issues addressed by the Game Management Advisory Council. Jim also indicated that he would like to discuss what the CFG can realistically address in the allotted time.

The group then discussed priority topics to cover in future CFG meetings. The facilitation team made note of these on the meeting's Mural. Suggested topics include educational outreach regarding cougar safety and various ways to communicate with animal and landowners. Topics will be outlined in greater detail in the CFG Work Plan. Priority topics include clarifying the goals of education and outreach in reducing human-cougar conflict, outreach to small and large-scale animal owners to include risk mitigation strategies. CFG members also indicated that clarification on how WDFW will use the Cougar Safety Science Review Panel Results and Commission Presentation would be helpful.

**Action Item:** Triangle will create a CFG Work Plan for future meetings based on what the CFG discussed.

### **How the CFG Will Work Together**

The facilitator asked CFG members what they would expect to see in an Operating Protocols document for a dialogue focused group like the CFG. The facilitation team captured input on a digital white board.

- Respectful and polite dialogue.

- All members should listen with the goal of learning from each other.
- All members should assume that everyone has positive intent.
- The CFG should start by clarifying what the group does and does not know.
- Try to respond to comments with “yes, and...”

The facilitator then presented a draft set of Operating Protocols and asked members if they felt anything was missing. There were no additions suggested and members had no objections to the draft operating protocols.

### **Goals for Education and Outreach to Reduce Human-cougar Conflict**

Members expressed the following goals for education and outreach to reduce human-cougar conflict:

- Help people understand the area they are moving into so they can understand potential threats and mitigating actions they can take
- Implement regional specific education
- Create a bridge between WDFW and local communities as well as urban communities
- Tips for what do upon cougar sightings
- Educate the public about the uses of working guard animals
- Teach people that it is possible to coexist with cougars
- Improve and standardize what is provided regarding tools
- Provide more outreach about the costs and benefits of living with cougars
- Communicate that everyone can take part in mitigating and reducing human-cougar conflict
- Impacts of cougars on ungulates
- When there is conflict, communicate that there are options to deal with it
- Encourage people to think of interactions as coexistence as opposed to conflict
- Think about how to celebrate the presence of cougars

The group discussed what is working and what can be improved regarding education and outreach for reducing human-cougar conflict. Members expressed that the following education and outreach efforts can be improved:

- Outreach materials can be shortened and made easier to find
- WDFW information can be more accessible to specific audiences
- More people should be educated about where cougars live
- Increase education about the uses of working guard animals

Member expressed that the following education and outreach efforts are working well:

- WDFW field staff and conflict specialists do a good job speaking to the public

Members also expressed that the following audiences should be engaged to achieve success:

- Hikers at trailheads
- Chambers of Commerce in specific communities
- Various types of farmers
- Hunters, specifically those taking hunter’s education courses
- Youth
- Livestock owners
- People that have recently moved into smaller, rural communities who are unfamiliar with cougars

### **Review Assignment 1 to Set up for CFG meeting Two**

Sam Montgomery, WDFW, reviewed existing outreach materials provided in the meeting packet and welcomed members to provide feedback on all documents. Sam noted that WDFW is printing the coexistence brochures and they will be given to regional offices and field staff.

With regard to a question about the nexus between development and human-cougar interactions, Sam explained WDFW has done more work in particular areas and have reached out to realtor associations and housing developers on a case-by-case basis. Brochures are also available to organizations such as the Inland Northwest Wildlife Council and local authorities to provided publicly. A CFG member also noted that fishing derbies and other seasonal events that involve youth is an opportunity to expand outreach.

The facilitation team will work with WDFW to provide an updated packet – the original did not include all materials Sam presented – for review by the second meeting.

**Action Item:** Triangle will send an updated packet of outreach materials to CFG members.

**Action Item:** Triangle will send a Doodle poll to schedule the next CFG meeting in June.

**Action Item:** The CFG will review outreach materials and be prepared to provide feedback at CFG Meeting 2.

### **Wrap-up and Next Steps**

The facilitator then reviewed action items and next steps, noting that Triangle will draft a meeting summary and send it out the CFG for review. The group discussed the possibility of an in-person meeting in Ellensburg in late summer and Jim noted that WDFW could cover light refreshments for the meeting but not travel expenses. Members also expressed that a hybrid option would be ideal. The second meeting will take place in June and will be a web meeting.

**Action Item:** Triangle will send a draft meeting summary to the CFG team for review.

The meeting adjourned at 4:00 p.m.

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) | Cougar Focus Group (CFG)

CFG Meeting 2

June 6, 2022 | 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

FINAL Meeting Summary v.9.21.22

**Meeting Purpose:**

- Review WDFW’s proposed work plan and outcomes for the CFG to work toward
- Review goal statements for outreach identified by CFG members at CFG meeting one
- Review outreach materials provided by WDFW for feedback
- Determine challenges and identify actions to improve education and outreach for small-scale livestock owners

**Meeting Attendees**

**CFG Members**

- Mark Elbroch, Panthera (Research Community)
- Greg Jones, Professional Wildlife Working Dogs (Interaction Response Community)
- Marie Neumiller, Inland Northwest Wildlife Council (Hunting Community)
- Dan Paul, Humane Society (Preservation Community)
- Josh Rosenau, Mountain Lion Foundation (Conservation Community)
- Rachel Wendling, Washington Trails Association (Recreation Community)

- Dave West, Klickitat County Farm Bureau Board (Livestock/Agriculture Community)

**WDFW Team**

- Jim Brown
- Rebecca Elder
- Samantha Montgomery
- Stephanie Simek
- Maci Todd
- Kyla West

**Triangle Associates (Triangle)**

- Thomas Christian
- Jacob Hibbeln

**Action Items**

Action Item	Responsibility	Suggested Timeline
Send out a meeting summary of CFG Meeting 2	Triangle	Complete
Follow up with CFG members about the information that WDFW has about ungulate feeding and deterring cougars.	WDFW	When possible
Fill out the Doodle poll to indicate availability for CFG Meeting 3.	CFG members.	Complete

## **Meeting Summary**

### **Welcome and Introduction**

Jim Brown, WDFW, spoke to the recent cougar attack in Stevens County. The facilitator then asked each meeting participant to introduce themselves and share what they were bringing to the meeting. CFG members introduced themselves, followed by the WDFW Coordination Team. Many expressed concerns for the young woman attacked by the cougar in Stevens County.

The facilitator reviewed the agenda, meeting purpose, and action items from CFG Meeting One.

### **Review of Proposed Work Plan and CFG Outcomes**

Jim reviewed the proposed work plan and indicated that WDFW proposed narrowing the CFG's focus to how to improve outreach, education, and program support to reduce the risk of negative human-cougar interactions. He observed that members had expressed a common interest in these topics, and WDFW would find it helpful to collect specific recommendations from the CFG.

The facilitator reviewed the proposed outcomes for CFG Meetings Two, Three, and Four as well as the proposed topics for future meetings. Jim noted it is helpful to know if WDFW has the correct message(s) regarding risk reduction and noted the CFG should consider how WDFW can improve message delivery.

### **Review of education and outreach goals from meeting one**

The facilitator reviewed goal statements from CFG Meeting One, located on the [Mural board](#) and asked CFG members if there was anything missing regarding goals for education and outreach. Each CFG member was given the opportunity to speak about outreach goals. Most members expressed support for the goal statements identified previously in meeting one.

Members expressed the following ideas about the education and outreach goals identified in meeting one.

- The goal of creating bridges between communities and WDFW should include outreach to municipalities, rural communities, and community organizations.
- Broad outreach goals should be further specified to include:
  - Following up with landowner after each negative human-cougar interactions and bringing biologists in to speak with landowners.
  - Ensuring the public feels heard.
  - Media training to ensure news articles include accurate information about cougars.

### **Input on outreach materials from CFG members**

The facilitator reminded all that WDFW outreach materials were sent out following CFG Meeting One and indicated that the discussion today was intended to identify gaps in the outreach materials.

The facilitator called on each member to provide input on outreach materials. Many members complimented the messaging in the document while some members observed a disconnect between the message in the document and the message provided by WDFW field staff. Some members expressed a concern that some WDFW field staff communicate to the public that lethal removal is the first option if there is a negative human-cougar interaction, which they observed was not in line with the material.

Discussion and feedback also included the following points.



- It is good that social media messages do not have a fear-oriented message.
- WDFW should try and specifically relate to low-income audiences who cannot always afford risk mitigation tools like fencing to keep out cougars by suggesting low-cost alternatives.
- WDFW should attempt to balance the costs of cougar removal.
- What happens in reality on the ground is not always how it is described in policy or in documents. There should be a clear picture of the role that landowners play in both helping reduce negative human-wildlife interactions and removing a cougar.
- It is important to customize social media messages so that they are shareable on multiple platforms.
- It is important for outreach materials to emphasize the rarity of negative human-cougar interactions.
- WDFW could reach out to the Washington State Parks and other state/county landowners to increase the number of trail head signs and information on trailhead boards.
- Further education about the use of hounds by the State could be beneficial given that recreational hound hunting is illegal.
- Training the media on how to provide factual messages about negative human-cougar interactions could be beneficial.

### **Small-scale Livestock Owners Education and Outreach – Recommended Actions**

The group reviewed current WDFW programs and approaches and discussed approaches that WDFW is currently taking that can be built upon in addition to what is not working. The group also discussed actions WDFW could take to help achieve these goals. All notes were taken in this [Mural](#) and are summarized at the end of this document.

### **Wrap-up and Next Steps**

In response to a question about why deterrence was not on the meeting work plan, Jim indicated that this was intentionally left off because this discussion topic was outside the CFG's scope. In response to a question about the science regarding ungulate feeding, Jim indicated that he could follow up with the group about this.

**Action Item:** WDFW will follow up with CFG members about the information that WDFW has about ungulate feeding and deterring cougars as soon as possible.

**Action Item:** Triangle will send out the draft meeting summary of CFG Meeting Two as soon as possible.

**Action Item:** Fill out the Doodle poll to indicate availability for CFG Meeting 3 as soon as possible.

The group discussed the potential for an in-person meeting in September and Jim indicated that all WDFW staff were required to wear masks due to the state of Washington COVID-19 protocols, unless protocols change. Under the current protocol, non-WDFW participants would not be required to wear masks. Members indicated when they would be available.

The facilitator asked each CFG member for closing comments and Jim thanked CFG members for their active engagement. The meeting adjourned at 2:00 p.m.

Cougar Focus Group – Outreach and Education Recommendations Tracker

Goals	Current Program Assessment	Recommended Actions to Achieve Goal(s)
<p><b>General Outreach Goals:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Celebrate the presence of cougars on the landscape</li> <li>• Inform the public about potential threats and mitigating actions they could take to reduce the risk of negative human-cougar interactions</li> <li>• Create a bridge between WDFW and the local communities</li> </ul>	<p><i>See notes above regarding existing outreach material</i></p>	<p><b>Celebrate the presence of cougars on the landscape by:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Message the role that cougars and other predators play in the ecosystem</li> <li>• Rely on passionate experts to present about how to reduce negative human-cougar interactions in schools</li> <li>• Utilize creative media such as trail cameras and create an avenue for the public/students to study cougars</li> <li>• Co-host information booths at local and county fairs with partner organizations</li> <li>• Discuss cougars without attaching a negative connotation</li> <li>• Organize citizen science cougar programs</li> <li>• Maintain a collaborative effort to keep legislative support for outreach funding</li> </ul> <p><b>Inform the public about potential threats and mitigating actions they could take to reduce the risk of negative human-cougar interactions by:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop regional specific cougar education</li> <li>• Educate the public about topics including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Impacts of cougars on ungulates</li> <li>○ Use of working guard animals</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Educate the public in the following areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Law enforcement</li> <li>○ Hunter education courses</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Articulate the holistic cost of removing cougars from the ecosystem and resulting effects on local communities</li> <li>• Partner with organizations such as Panthera, Mountain Lion Foundation, and the Working Dogs Foundation to educate the public about deterrence strategies</li> <li>• Hold “Go to you” presentations with community organizations</li> </ul> <p><b>Create a bridge between WDFW and local communities by:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communicate how to live with cougars, especially to people who are new to rural communities</li> <li>• Work with local utility companies to provide information on how life with wildlife is different in rural communities</li> <li>• Work with conservation districts to help distribute educational information</li> <li>• Communicate with community welcome groups to educate newcomers</li> <li>• Communicate with state university extension programs</li> <li>• Participate in local community classes</li> <li>• NextDoor outreach with accurate information</li> </ul>
<p><b>Improve outreach and education to small-scale livestock owners to minimize risk of negative human-cougar interactions</b></p>	<p><b>Small-scale livestock owners</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is sometimes a disconnect between policy and what field staff are telling landowners about cougar removal</li> <li>• WDFW could communicate non-lethal removal as a first option. Look to California as an example</li> <li>• A livestock owner’s anecdotal experience working with wildlife conflict specialists is generally good</li> </ul>	<p><b>Recommended Actions to Achieve Goal</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Follow up with a landowner post-incident and bringing biologists in to speak with landowners</li> <li>• Include information about the ecological costs of removing cougars and communications with wildlife conflict specialists in high-density cougar areas</li> <li>• Identify lessons learned and gaps in knowledge after each incident</li> <li>• Options for addressing conflict should be transparent and allow for public input</li> <li>• Communicate a broad array of risk mitigation prescriptions and post-negative interaction response actions which do not result in a dead cougar</li> <li>• Design more robust mitigation plans</li> <li>• Consider how effective llamas are for deterring cougars</li> <li>• Provide information on how to best train livestock guard dogs</li> <li>• Educate small-scale livestock owners about available tools <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Radios with on/off settings for audio deterrence</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Remote camera systems</li> <li>○ Post current programs on the WDFW website</li> <li>● Seek State funding to provide funding support to small-scale livestock owners taking mitigation action on their property</li> <li>● Partner with non-profits who could provide funding support to small-scale livestock owners taking mitigation action on their property</li> <li>● Implement funding programs to support small-scale livestock owners taking mitigation actions on their property, including funding for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Livestock guard dog training programs</li> <li>○ For support with fencing, designate specific requirements</li> <li>○ Reimbursement program for defensive methods</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Improve outreach and education to Large-Scale Livestock Owners to minimize risk of negative human-cougar interactions</b>		<p><b>Recommended Actions to Achieve Goal</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Follow up with a landowner post-incident</li> <li>● Identify lessons learned and gaps in knowledge after each incident</li> </ul>
<b>Improve outreach and education to recreationist of all types to minimize risk of negative human-cougar interactions</b>		<p><b>Recommended Actions to Achieve Goal</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Outreach at trailheads and lands managed by Washington State Parks</li> <li>● Outreach to various recreation groups (hikers &amp; hunters) regarding tips for what to do upon a cougar siting</li> </ul>
<b>Improve public understanding of cougars by providing media basic science information about cougars and human-cougar interactions</b>		<p><b>Recommended Actions to Achieve Goal</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Customize social media messages for certain audiences and platforms</li> <li>● Create a science-based predator fact sheet (look to Florida as an example) to provide to media</li> <li>● Make information from WDFW accessible to specific audiences and easy to find on the WDFW website. This could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Outreach to low-income audiences</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Provide Science Communications <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Scientific review of options which outlines what does and does not work</li> <li>○ Connect existing understanding of animal behavior to the behavior of wild animals</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Invest in gathering more data on the effectiveness of moving cougars</li> </ul>

**Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) Cougar Focus Group (CFG)  
CFG Meeting Three  
September 27, 2022 | 9:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.**

FINAL Meeting Summary v. 10.11.22

**Meeting Purpose:**

- Continue roundtable discussion about small-scale livestock owner education and outreach programs.
- Roundtable review of current WDFW education and outreach programs targeted at all recreationists. Discuss potential actions that could be taken to improve outreach and education for all recreation users.
- Roundtable review of current WDFW education and outreach program targeted at large-scale livestock owners. Discuss potential actions that could be taken to improve outreach and education for large-scale livestock owners.

**Meeting Attendees:**

**CFG Members**

- Mark Elbroch, Panthera (Research Community)
- Greg Jones, Professional Wildlife Working Dogs (Interaction Response Community)
- Marie Neumiller, Inland Northwest Wildlife Council (Hunting Community)
- Josh Rosenau, Mountain Lion Foundation (Conservation Community)
- Dave West, Klickitat County Farm Bureau Board (Livestock/Agriculture Community)

**WDFW Team**

- Jim Brown
- Samantha Montgomery
- Maci Todd

**Triangle Associates (Triangle) Team**

- Thomas Christian
- Jacob Hibbeln

**Action Items**

Action Item	Responsibility	Suggested Timeline
Send out a meeting summary of CFG Meeting Three.	Triangle	Tuesday, October 18, 2022
Follow-up with Washington Trails Association about sending a representative to CFG Meeting Four.	Triangle/WDFW	As soon as possible
Follow up with CFG members about possible discussion topics for CFG Meeting Four.	Triangle/WDFW	As soon as possible

**Meeting Summary**

**Welcome and Introductions**

The facilitator asked each member to introduce themselves and to share what they were bringing to the meeting that day. Following introductions, the facilitator indicated that CFG members expressed a

desire for roundtable dialogue between members and suggested some discussion topics for the meeting. The facilitator then reviewed the agenda and operating protocols.

Jim Brown, WDFW, acknowledged the difficulties associated with a hybrid meeting and explained that WDFW decided to hold the meeting remotely because the majority of CFG members were unable to attend an in-person meeting.

The facilitator provided an update that the Washington Trails Association (WTA) representative who had been participating in the CFG took a position with a different organization and WTA was not able to send an alternate for CFG Meeting Three.

### **Look back on Work Completed and Work Plan Ahead**

The facilitator reviewed the CFG work plan and discussion tracking table, emphasizing what CFG members discussed at CFG Meeting Two. After reviewing specific actions for outreach and education for small-scale livestock owners, the facilitator asked members to brainstorm any topics that were missing or that should be discussed further.

### **Continue Roundtable Discussion on Small-Scale Livestock Owner Education and Outreach Programs**

One CFG member indicated that pre-incident actions should be added to the outreach and education tracking table because often cougar sightings are not reported due to a fear of lethal removal. CFG members discussed the importance of communicating to the public the range of non-lethal intervention options and steps that WDFW takes before lethal removal is warranted.

CFG members discussed the need for a clear policy approach regarding non-lethal and lethal removal of cougars and agreed that WDFW should better communicate its approach and policy to the public.

- One member suggested the California policy for cougar removal as a model for how WDFW can reduce negative human-cougar interactions. It was noted that in California, there must be multiple incidences and the state must take multiple intervention options to prevent conflict before lethal removal.
- Other members expressed concern with the California policy noting that it is too prescriptive and can limit lethal recourse when needed. These members suggested that Washington needs flexibility to respond to incidents of various types and suggested that WDFW should publicly communicate the existing steps to address incidents.
- All CFG members observed a need and suggested WDFW improve communications and public expectations regarding non-lethal removal options and the mitigation steps that the agency takes before moving forward with lethal removal.

The group discussed pre-incident actions and members indicated that WDFW could proactively reach out to residents new to rural areas to help them understand how they can handle human-cougar conflicts.

Members discussed how funding programs could be created to support action on private lands. Some members suggested partnering with non-profits to provide educational tools to private landowners. Other suggested that reliable state funding is needed to support private landowners taking action on their own land to reduce the chance of a negative human-cougar interaction. The facilitation team took notes in the meeting [Mural](#). The full discussion is captured in the table on pages four through seven of this document.

Members discussed ways to improve WDFW's post-incident response engagement with landowners, specifically landowners in chronic conflict with cougars. The full discussion is captured in the table on pages four through seven of this document.

#### **Discussion on Outreach and Engagement Programs Targeted at Recreation Communities**

Sam Montgomery, WDFW, reviewed WDFW's recreation community outreach approach and list of topics sent to members prior to the meeting. Sam highlighted that cougar safety educational signs are placed at trailheads in English and Spanish and explained how WDFW utilizes social media to educate the public. Sam also indicated that some communities and organizations have reached out to WDFW to share educational materials. Sam outlined partners that WDFW is working with and welcomed feedback about how to reach more partner organizations.

Sam highlighted that WDFW has decades of experience engaging with the hunting and fishing communities, and is aware that it can improve its outreach and communications approach to other recreation communities such as hikers, bikers, etc. All discussion on this subject is captured in the table on pages four through seven of this document of this document and in the meeting [Mural](#).

#### **Discussion on Outreach and Engagement Programs Targeted at the Large-Scale Livestock Owners**

Jim explained that WDFW's approach is primarily to engage with large-scale livestock owners on an owner-by-owner basis. Jim also indicated that local information sharing relies mostly on regional WDFW wildlife conflict specialists. He noted that owners have questions about their total depredation loss to cougars and observed it is a challenge to identify the cause of depredations whether they are due to cougars or other causes. Often this is because large-scale livestock owners' animals are far afield and by the time depredations are discovered, it is hard to identify the cause. Jim explained the compensation program and the metrics associated with it.

Some members shared that much of the outreach approach to large-scale livestock owners is working and agreed that identifying the cause of depredations is a challenge. All discussion and suggestions on this subject are captured in the table on pages four through seven of this document.

#### **Wrap-up and Next Steps**

The facilitator reviewed the CFG Work Plan and highlighted which topics were proposed for CFG Meeting Four. All members present supported holding CFG Meeting Four in-person and some members suggested Thursdays or Fridays are best. WDFW expressed that they would be at an event in Spokane November 7 – 10 and that November 4 in Ellensburg could be an option for CFG Meeting Four. Other potential dates included November 17 and 18. Members shared they appreciated the format of the meeting with more roundtable dialogue and hoped that an in-person meeting would further encourage group dialogue.

The meeting adjourned early at 2:15 p.m.

Goals	Current Program Assessment	Recommended Actions to Achieve Goal(s)
<p><b>Improve Outreach and Education to small-scale livestock owners</b></p>	<p><b>Post-incident engagement with landowners</b></p>	<p><b>Funding actions might include:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hold seminars or symposiums funded by admission charges or fundraisers to create a collaborative space for specific groups to discuss how to support small-scale livestock owners.</li> <li>• Work with non-profits to provide initial funding and encourage legislative champions to get involved.</li> <li>• Find legislative champions to encourage bi-partisan support to advocate for funding support.</li> <li>• Find budget neutral ways to deal with cougar issues.</li> <li>• Consider funding for small-scale livestock owners through a conservation lens.</li> <li>• Funding options should come from various levels of government (example: state, county, city).</li> <li>• Use state funding infrastructure (e.g., the Recreation and Conservation Office) to administer funding.</li> <li>• Post-incident response engagement with landowners, and specifically landowners in chronic conflict with cougars: utilizing guard dogs.</li> <li>• Ensure landowners have some agency when engaging with them about handling negative human-cougar interactions.</li> <li>• Regular one-on-one follow-up with landowners post-conflict.</li> <li>• Use of incentives for corrective action first followed by consequences if incentives do not facilitate a change of behavior and human-cougar conflict persists. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Consequence: Consequences for cougars that are repeat offenders</li> <li>○ Consequence: Depredations</li> <li>○ Incentive: Grants for landowners that support corrective action</li> <li>○ Incentive: Voucher program to provide support with corrective actions that landowners can take.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Consider what neighborhoods can do to prevent incidents, rather than focusing only on individual landowners, and ensuring that residents are aware of how their actions impact their neighbors in terms of human-cougar conflict.</li> <li>• The overarching goal should be to break the cycle of lethal removal.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Improve outreach and education for recreation users in Washington</b></p>	<p><b>Current WDFW recreation focused outreach and education:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One challenge is with engaging with recreation audiences that are aware of WDFW rules and regulations, as the agency’s traditional audiences (e.g., hunters and fishers).</li> </ul>	<p><b>General Cougar Education might include:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make people aware of when they are in cougar country. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ When doing this, avoid framing cougars as a problem.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Consider how to reach people that don’t think of themselves as needing information.</li> <li>• Produce video material about basic wildlife behavior that includes guidelines for youth and newcomers.</li> <li>• Provide more outreach in schools.</li> <li>• Provide “Cougar 101” course framework that celebrates cougars and teaches recreationists basic facts.</li> </ul> <p><b>Education through partner organizations might include:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider the common questions that WDFW staff receive at sporting shows and events.</li> <li>• Identify recreation organizations to partner with and provide them with shareable information.</li> <li>• All state agencies, not just WDFW, should participate in outreach to change cultural perceptions about wildlife.</li> </ul> <p><b>Business outreach might look like:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outreach to Airbnb hosts and hotels in areas where cougars are common.</li> <li>• Outreach to recreation retailers for information about cougar safety at point of sale.</li> </ul> <p><b>Education regarding perception of cougars:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assess risk relative to past experiences.</li> <li>• Communicate positive experience and the chance/risk of a negative human-cougar interaction.</li> <li>• Find ways to relate cougars to people. Some members expressed concern with this approach and with anthropomorphizing cougars.</li> <li>• Ensure that communicating about a nearby cougar does not violate fair chase rules or put the cougar in danger.</li> </ul> <p><b>Exploring ways to engage the following audiences:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trail runners</li> <li>• Recreation newcomers</li> <li>• Mountain bikers</li> </ul>
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vacation renters and rural visitors</li> <li>• Hunters</li> <li>• Anglers</li> <li>• Hikers</li> <li>• Backpackers</li> <li>• Rock climbers</li> <li>• Wildlife viewers (web camera operators)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Improve outreach and education for large-scale livestock owners in Washington</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Statistics about cougars should be accurate and backed up by field work. It is important to share how accurate statistics are.</li> </ul> <p><b>What is working:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WDFW’s current approach to distributing information about cougars.</li> <li>• WDFW’s current focus on cougar removal.</li> <li>• Livestock guardian dog program.</li> </ul> <p><b>What is not working and what WDFW can do more of:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore why there are currently more cougar observations in some parts of Washington.</li> <li>• There is more funding for wolf loss and mitigation than there is for loss and conflict mitigation with cougars.</li> <li>• Outreach to large-scale livestock owners can be</li> </ul>	<p><b>Challenges and problems associated with compensating large-scale livestock owners for loss:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compensation should be available for cougar-incurred losses of sheep and cattle.</li> </ul> <p><b>WDFW can do the following to encourage accurate communication of facts:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus mitigation actions at the cougar population level given how difficult it is to identify if a loss is due to an individual cougar. Some members expressed concern with this approach because not all cougars are offenders and often time offending cougars are opportunistic.</li> <li>• Support livestock owner peer-to-peer communication about deterrence.</li> </ul> <p><b>The following can be done to improve existing data on cougars:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore how to identify the source of loss sooner.</li> <li>• Use smaller scales of research.</li> <li>• Use models to observe and identify confidence in what caused a loss. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Example: Bayesian approach to modeling</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Use drones to observe cougars and livestock.</li> <li>• Use ear tags to find mortalities faster.</li> <li>• Look to approaches used to gathering data on wolves.</li> </ul> <p><b>Outreach</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dialogue does not have to revolve around specific incidents.</li> <li>• Target the timing of outreach with higher risk situations.</li> <li>• Outreach to the following organizations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Farm Bureau</li> <li>○ Local Governments</li> <li>○ Cattlemen Groups</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<p>difficult for the following reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Many large-scale livestock owners are independent.</li> <li>○ Some large-scale livestock owners are skeptical of the government.</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● One population control challenge is that not all cougars are offenders and often time offending cougars are opportunistic.</li> </ul> <p><b>Issues involved with reporting</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Reports available on the WDFW website do not reveal if an incident is caused by a problem cougar.</li> <li>● Volunteer reporting can be challenging due to peer pressure and social influence.</li> <li>● There is not enough data on losses.</li> <li>● Need to find killed animals early enough to know what created the loss.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ WA Department of Agriculture</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Determine what the larger goal for large-scale livestock owners.</li> </ul>
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## Appendix D: CFG Member Comments in Addendum to the Report

Cougar Focus Group Final Thoughts

Greg Jones

Dec 12, 2022

### **California 3 Strikes Policy**

I did a little digging into this policy, (the reason for 3 strikes is primarily that population issues are a concern) and I happen to know a biologist that issues these permits. He also moves cats and collars them where needed. The results are that farmers are given the option of hazing the cats as a deterrent, on first strike. Hazing may or may not work but it is assumed in California that it does.

I would like to see the use of hounds along with our recently passed law that allows for training our hounds under a first strike policy in WA. Where applicable, hounds could be used to haze the cat. Also, a DNA sample would be taken with subsequent hazing as needed.

We also need to follow up on Bart George's study. He is generating a lot of data and creating the need for alternative study ideas.

### **Impact on Ungulates**

Another focus idea is to pursue more studies that show the impact of cougars on ungulates. Hunters are notorious for showing their disdain for cats who they assume have a serious impact on ungulates. Let's prove to hunters the need for cats in our ecosystem and that the impacts are acceptable.

### **WDFW Cougar Managers**

Lastly, I would like to see better relations with region level folks and management, within WDFW. It is very poor now. I don't think the region folks want a directive from management just more dialog. The cougar issue is vast and cooperation with all involved is necessary.