

Carnivore Rulemaking - Decision



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COUGAR RULES

WAC 220-415-100 Cougar hunting seasons and regulations

WAC 220-400-050 Pelt sealing and biological sample collection



WAC 220-415-100
Cougar hunting seasons and
regulations

WAC 220-415-100

Cougar hunting seasons and regulations

The proposed changes to this WAC are:

- to list the mortality caps for cougar harvest seasons by Cougar Hunt Management Unit (previously PMUs),
- to confirm that the season shall close in Cougar Hunt Management Units once the cap has been reached, or by March 31, whichever comes first,
- to specify that all independent-aged harvested or conflict-removed cougars shall count towards the total cougar mortality cap and that conflict removals will be counted toward the cap beginning April 1 of the current hunt year, and
- to specify that the cougar hotline and website will be updated for closures weekly on Thursdays throughout the harvest season, which begins September 1 and runs through March 31.



Harvest Framework

Caps are set using the following structure:

- In **CDAUs** where the total cougar mortality exceeds 16% when averaged over the prior complete three-year period, the **CHMUs** within that **CDAU** that are over 16% receive a 10% cap until the next three-year season setting period; the remaining **CHMUs** receive a 16% cap.
- In **CDAUs** where the total cougar mortality remains below 16% when averaged over the prior complete three-year period, the **CHMUs** within those **CDAUs** will receive a 16% cap.

Caps will be reevaluated at the next three-year season setting period.



Cap Table

CDAU Name	CHMU	Hunt Area	Cap	Cap %	CDAU Name	CHMU	Hunt Area	Cap	Cap %
Okanogan Highlands	1	GMU 101	10	16%	North Cascades West	31	GMU 407	6	16%
Okanogan Highlands	2	GMU 105	3	16%	North Cascades West	32	GMU 418	6	16%
Northeast	3	GMUs 108, 111	4	10%	North Cascades West	33	GMUs 426, 437	9	16%
Northeast	4	GMU 113	7	16%	North Cascades West	34	GMU 448	10	16%
Northeast	5	GMU 117	5	10%	North Cascades West	35	GMU 450	3	16%
Northeast	6	GMU 121	4	10%	South Cascades West	36	GMU 454	2	16%
Northeast	7	GMU 124	3	10%	North Cascades West	37	GMU 460	7	16%
Columbia Basin East	8	GMUs 127, 130	4	16%	South Cascades West	38	GMUs 466, 485	2	16%
Columbia Basin East	9	GMUs 133, 136	5	16%	Willapa Hills	39	GMUs 501, 504, 506, 530	11	16%
Columbia Basin East	10	GMUs 139, 142	1	16%	South Cascades West	40	GMUs 503, 505, 520, 550	8	16%
Southeast	11	GMUs 145, 166, 175, 178	3	10%	South Cascades West	41	GMUs 510, 513	4	16%
Southeast	12	GMUs 149, 154, 162, 163	4	10%	South Cascades West	42	GMU 516	5	16%
Southeast	13	GMUs 169, 172, 181, 186	3	10%	South Cascades West	43	GMUs 524, 554, 556	3	16%
Okanogan	14	GMU 203	6	16%	South Cascades West	44	GMUs 560, 572	10	16%
Okanogan Highlands	15	GMU 204	9	16%	South Cascades West	45	GMU 564	1	16%
Okanogan	16	GMUs 209, 215	5	16%	South Cascades West	46	GMU 568	3	16%
Okanogan	17	GMUs 218, 231	6	16%	South Cascades West	47	GMU 574	2	16%
Okanogan	18	GMU 224	3	16%	South Cascades Southeast	48	GMUs 578	2	10%
Okanogan	19	GMUs 233, 239	5	16%	Olympic Peninsula	49	GMUs 601, 602, 603, 612	7	16%
Okanogan	20	GMUs 242, 243	6	16%	Olympic Peninsula	50	GMUs 607, 615, 618	6	16%
Central Cascades East	21	GMUs 244, 246, 247	7	16%	Olympic Peninsula	51	GMUs 621, 624	7	16%
Central Cascades East	22	GMUs 245, 250	7	16%	Olympic Peninsula	52	GMU 627	2	16%
		GMUs 248, 254, 260, 262,			Olympic Peninsula	53	GMU 633, 636, 651	8	16%
Columbia Basin West	23	266, 269	8	16%	Olympic Peninsula	54	GMUs 638, 642, 648	8	16%
Central Cascades East	24	GMUs 249, 251	7	16%	South Cascades West	55	GMUs 652, 666	4	16%
Columbia Basin West	25	GMUs 272, 278, 284, 290	5	16%	South Cascades West	56	GMUs 653, 654	6	16%
Central Cascades East	26	GMUs 328, 329, 330, 334, 335	8	16%			GMUs 658, 660, 663, 672,		
South Cascades East	27	GMUs 336, 340, 342, 346	7	16%	Willapa Hills	57	673, 681, 684, 699	13	16%
South Cascades East	28	GMUs 352, 356, 360, 364, 368	7	16%	South Cascades West	58	GMU 667	4	16%
Columbia Basin West	29	GMUs 371, 372, 373, 379, 381	3	16%					
South Cascades Southeast	30	GMUs 382, 388	3	10%					

Management Goals

This proposed management framework is based on Washington cougar research and was created through a collaborative effort including agency scientists, regional biologists, species specialists, and management staff.

This framework is designed to maintain cougar population stability and adult male territoriality on the landscape.

Using the scientifically-derived range of the intrinsic growth rate (10-16%) for management provides:

- a conservative and adaptable trigger to excessive mortality (i.e., caps drop to 10%), and
- flexibility due to uncertainty in components of the model (i.e., density estimate, designated cougar habitat).



Proposal versus Current Rule

- The current rule cap total is 276*
- The proposed rule cap total is 317
- Based on the units that never reached 13% this year, probable increase in hunter harvest between rules is estimated to be ~10 cats
- This season 38 (66%) of CHMUs would not have reached the 13% cap and 91% of CHMUs would not exceed the 13% cap based on hunter removals alone



2024-2025 harvest season

- Total of 241 independent-aged cougars removed statewide
 - 151 were hunter harvest (63%), 90 were conflict (37%)
 - Total mortality was 35 cats below the 13% cap*; Hunter harvest mortality was 125 cats below the 13% cap*



Public Input

- Common Themes:
 - General support
 - General opposition
 - Use 13% instead of 16%, no changes to the current rule (incl. 20%), wait for the data
 - Do not drop the cap to 10%, use a cap of 20%+
 - CHMUs will close before the harvest season starts
 - Conflict mortalities should not count toward the cap; unfair to sportsmen
 - There are too many cougars – ungulate decline, human safety concern – too many predators
 - Year-round cougar season, start August 1, end Apr 30



Public Input

- Common Themes:
 - No caps in human populated areas, increase the cap to reduce conflict
 - Manage at the GMU level
 - Follow the science and biologists' recommendations
 - Cougars have intrinsic value
 - Create a special permit hound hunt for controlled harvest management
 - Focus on cougar conflict and not on reducing hunting opportunity
 - Licensed cougar hunters should be used for conflict removal
 - The science is insufficient
 - No cougar hunting





WAC 220-400-050
Requirements for sealing of pelts
and collection of biological
information for river otter,
cougar, lynx, and bobcat

WAC 220-400-050

Requirements for sealing of pelts and collection of biological information for river otter, cougar, lynx, and bobcat

The proposed COUGAR changes to this WAC are:

- to require that cougars must be sealed within 3 days of the harvest (barring holidays and weekends) and must have proof of sex attached at time of sealing, and
- to remove the cougar hotline reporting language requirements.

The proposed BOBCAT and RIVER OTTER changes are:

- to specify the information and details needed for submitting a bobcat or otter pelt for sealing, and
- to make it possible for taxidermists/fur buyers to receive sealed bobcat pelts for later jaw submission by the hunter, which is what we are currently practicing.



Management Goals

If adopted, these amendments will allow WDFW to remove the cougar reporting hotline, which was hardly being used, and require cougars be brought in for sealing within 3 days of harvest. This shortens the total reporting time required by hunters but allows staff to account for cougar mortality at a faster and timelier rate. Many hunters were already getting their cats sealed within 3 days and before calling the hotline, which had a 3-day reporting requirement.

These amendments will also clarify the rulemaking around collecting lower bobcat jaws for assessing the population's status, and specify what information is needed to get bobcat and otter pelts sealed.



Public Input

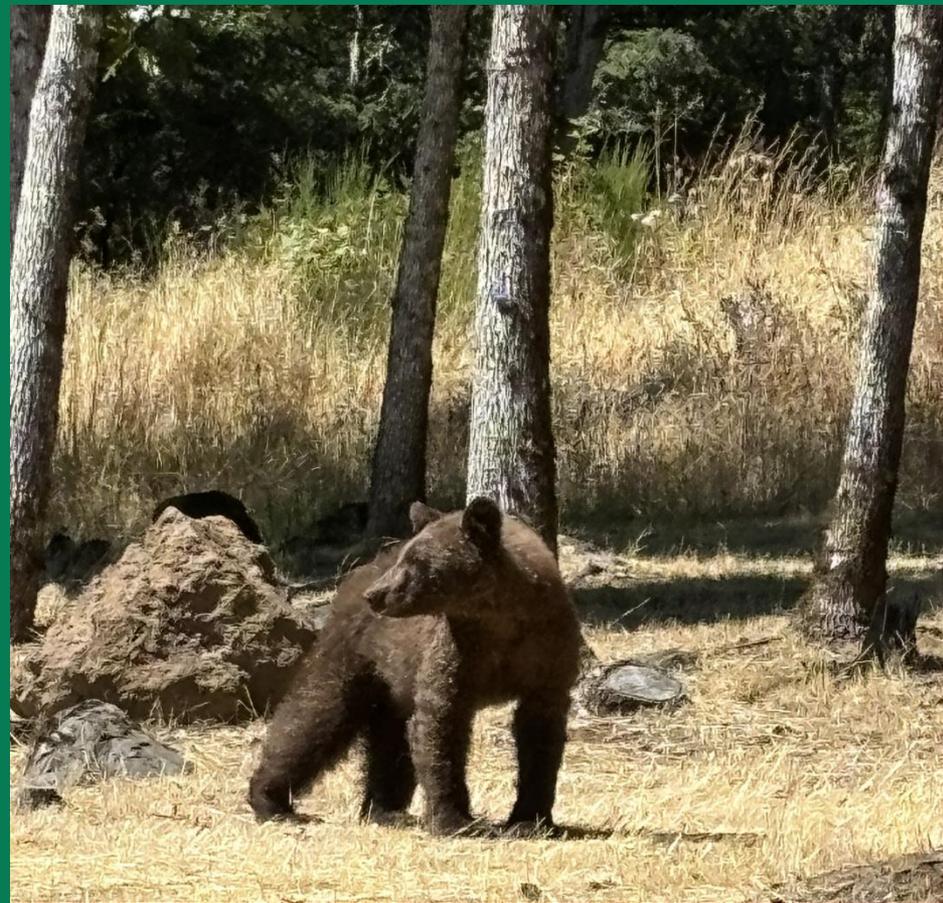
- Common Themes:
 - General support
 - General opposition
 - 3 days to seal cougars is too extreme; require a longer pelt sealing window (10 days, etc)
 - Department staff aren't available often enough for a 3-day sealing window to work
 - Don't collect lower jaws
 - Don't allow trapping





Questions?





BEAR RULES

WAC 220-415-090 Fall black bear hunting seasons and regulations



WAC 220-415-090
Fall black bear hunting seasons
and regulations

WAC 220-415-090

Fall black bear hunting seasons and regulations

The proposed changes to this WAC are:

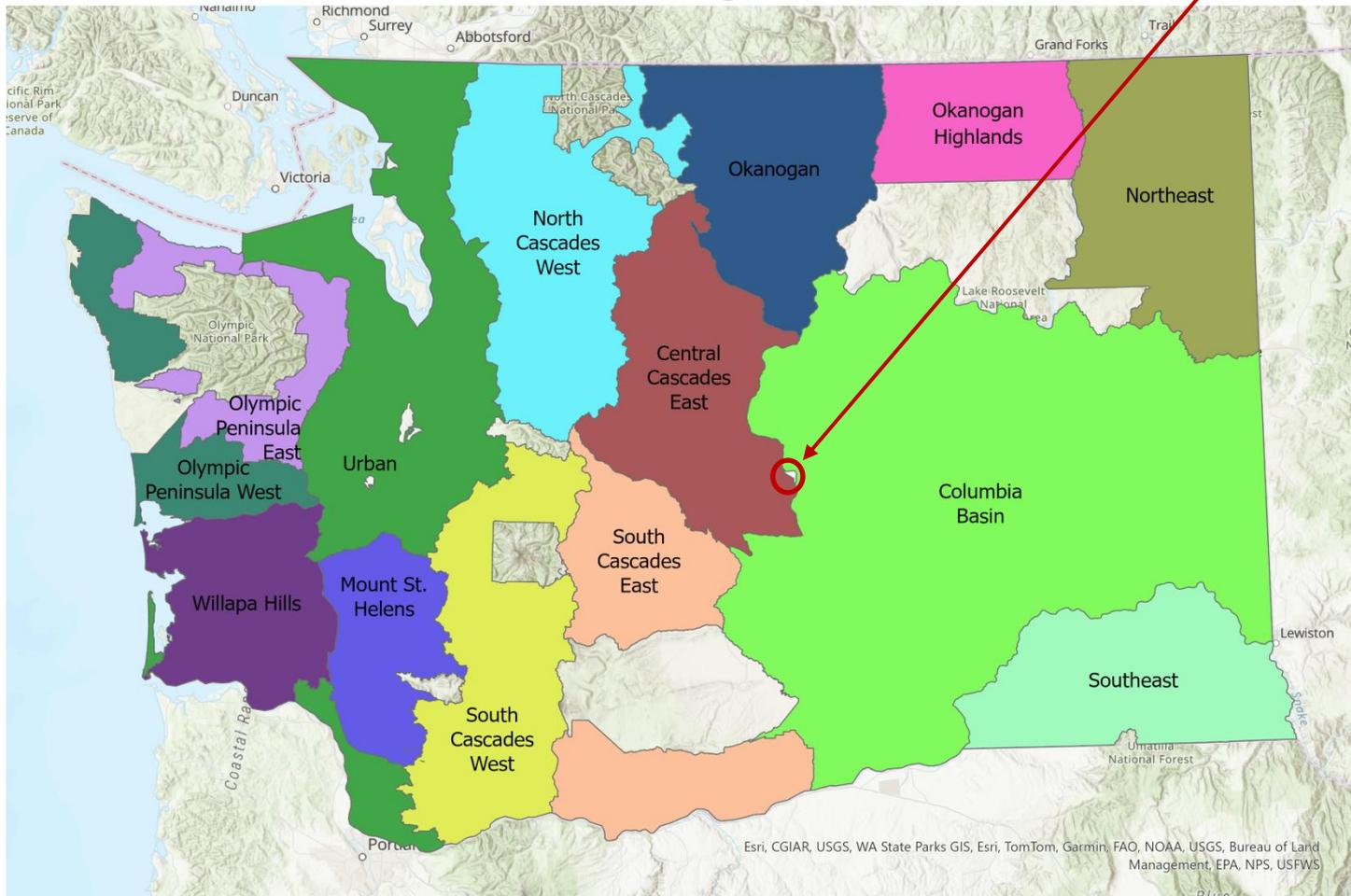
- to specify the black bear hunting season dates and bag limits for the 14 Black Bear Management Units (BBMU),
- to identify where it is illegal to harvest black bear in Washington,
- to make it unlawful to kill cubs (less than one-year old) and females with cubs,
- to identify the list of GMUs where the Bear ID Test will be required, and
- to specify that mandatory bear tooth samples must be submitted to the Department by December 1 of the current hunt year.



BBMUs

Recommended Adjustment:
Add GMU 330 to the Central
Cascades East BBMU

Black Bear Management Units



Harvest Framework

Objective → Manage for stable bear populations at the BBMU-scale

female mortality rate \leq female intrinsic growth rate

Female Intrinsic Growth Rate = 8%
(Statewide Average)

If mortality rate $>$ intrinsic growth rate when averaged over the prior complete 3-year average, then decrease the season length by 2-week increments starting with the opening date and reduce bag limit to 1 bear.



Recommended Season Setting by BBMU

BBMU	Female Mortality Rate	Bag Limit	Season Dates
Northeast	5%	2	August 1 - November 15
<i>Columbia Basin*</i>	NA	2	August 1 - November 15
Southeast	7%	2	August 1 - November 15
Okanogan Highlands	6%	2	August 1 - November 15
Okanogan**	7%	1	August 15 - November 15
Central Cascades East	6%	2	August 1 - November 15
South Cascades East	5%	2	August 1 - November 15
North Cascades West	5%	2	August 1 - November 15
<i>Urban*</i>	20%	2	August 1 - November 15
South Cascades West	6%	2	August 1 - November 15
Mt. St. Helens	7%	2	August 1 - November 15
Willapa Hills	15%	1	August 15 - November 15
Olympic West	8%	2	August 1 - November 15
Olympic East	5%	2	August 1 - November 15

*BBMUs are not being managed at the intrinsic growth rate in urban or non-habitat areas

**A lower density was estimated based on site-specific observations; District Bio recommended conservative decision

+No bear harvest in GMUs 157, 410-417, 419-424, 490, 522, and 655



Framework Goals

This proposed management framework is based on Washington black bear research and was created through a collaborative effort including agency scientists, regional biologists, species specialists, and management staff.

This proposal is designed to maintain stable populations, except in urban areas where the social carrying capacity for bears is lower.

These amendments allow the department to protect cubs and females with cubs, to require the bear ID test in all potential places where a grizzly bear may disperse, and to make tooth submission enforceable by adding a deadline.



Public Input

- Common Themes:
 - General support
 - General opposition
 - No changes to existing rule, currently sustainable
 - Too many bears – ungulate declines, increased conflict, timber damage – increase harvest, use a higher %female mortality rate
 - Too difficult to identify if sow has cubs when afield without the use of hounds or bait, increases noncompliance rate unnecessarily
 - Use a September season opening date, or use an Aug 1 opening date in all units, extend season into late buck hunts



Public Input

- Common Themes:
 - Don't require bear ID test in unnecessary GMUs
 - Manage bears at the GMU level
 - No bear hunting, increase protections
 - Create a spring bear permit system as a management tool, data supports it
 - Allow hound hunting and baiting for controlled harvest management
 - Reduce conflict removals



