

FACT SHEET

TOPIC: Oregon Cougar Killing Target Areas

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) proposes establishing four cougar killing target areas encompassing 6,236 square miles, primarily in remote eastern Oregon.

Within these target areas federal Wildlife Service agents and volunteer local houndsmen deputized by ODFW will kill as many cougars as they can locate using packs of hounds and snares to capture the cats for easy killing.

Because the hunters are government agents, they are not bound by Oregon law, which prohibits the use of hounds and snares by trophy hunters pursuing mountain lions.

The beneficiaries of the majority of the cougar killing are primarily hunters seeking better success hunting mule deer, a species whose population has been in steady decline for over 50 years.

Current science does not support this action. Mule deer declines are influenced primarily by lack of nutrition and access to quality forage. Predation has a minor and insignificant impact on population declines. (Forrester TD, Wittmer, HU 2013 Mammal Review 43:292-308; Pierce, BM, Bleich VC, Monteith KL, Bowyer RT 2012 Jnl of Mammology, 93(4): 977-88).

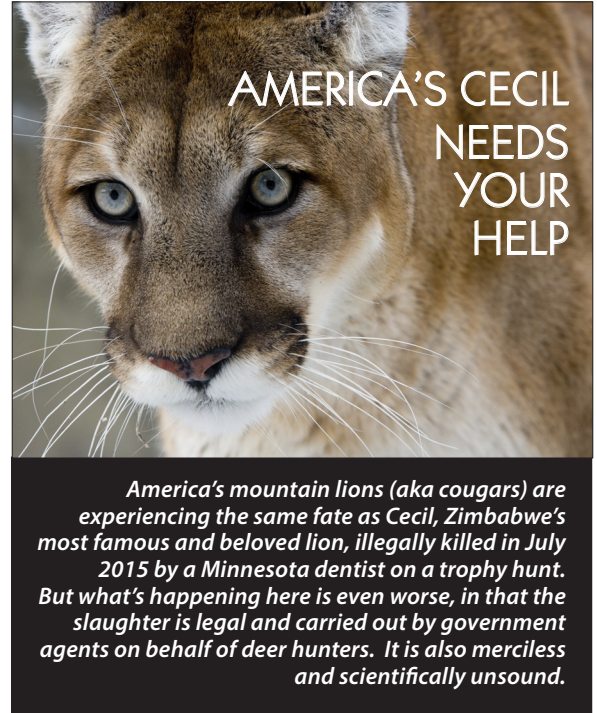
Two of the target areas have already been “treated” for more than four years by government agents with dogs and traps and there is no definitive data showing mule deer benefit. The total cost for treatment was over \$78,000 (approx. \$900 per cougar).

Research has shown that increased killing of cougars actually causes—not decreases—predation. Heavily hunted cougar populations show a change in age/sex ratios and an increase in predation. Intense hunting causes social chaos and an influx of juvenile males, the age class associated with increased predation and conflicts.

Only one of the target areas is for public safety and livestock conflicts. None of the wildlife management units in these areas have reported even one public safety threat since 1992. Although livestock predation has increased, it is still minor and its increase has correlated with the increase in hunting pressure, indicating conflicts are being caused/exacerbated by intensified hunting pressure.

Three of the four proposed target areas do not meet the criteria for target killing areas as directed by the Oregon Cougar Management Plan. The zone being targeted for cougar-human conflicts show very minor livestock damage and no public safety issues, and hence do not meet the Plan requirement for target locations where conflicts are the highest. Two of the mule deer target areas have already been treated for 5 years without measurable positive impact on deer. The Plan indicates target areas that fail to reach objectives are to be closed.

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