

Public Comment #29
BOS Recd. 10-7-24

From: brikarjo.ranch@yahoo.com
Sent: Friday, October 4, 2024 4:19 PM
To: BOS-Clerk of the Board
Subject: Mountain Lion Deprivation 24-1540

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Dear Members of the BOS,

After losing more than 20 goats and 2 sheep (over the years, most within the last 2 years), we are hoping to bring back a lion hunting season. It seems with all the wild fires in the past 5 years, more lions are stalking domestic animals. There used to be a season to hunt lion and I think bringing this back would be a great idea.

It's heart breaking to raise animals we love only to lose them to the lions and their cubs. The last kill at my house (this year) took out 7 animals that were just killed for sport and only one taken off my property.

Please, let's try and bring back a quality of life in the foothills and safety for all our animals/humans and have an open hunting season for the lions.

We do our best to lock up/protect our animals, but sometime with a larger herd (they don't all get along) and it's hard to do. It's so unfair to spend so much time and money and love just to lose it in one night.

I hope and pray you will take this matter into consideration. Please pass my email to all 5 board members.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Brian & Karen Bartholomew
5301 Marshall Rd.,
Garden Valley, CA 95633
(530) 333-1169

From: hello@thevillaagave.com
Sent: Saturday, October 5, 2024 12:05 PM
To: BOS-Clerk of the Board
Subject: Legistar Item 24-1540; Agenda Item 29, October 8, 2024

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October 4, 2024

To: El Dorado County Board of Supervisors
330 Fair Lane, Building B
Placerville, CA 95667
RE: Legistar Item 24-1540; Agenda Item 29, October 8, 2024

Honorable Supervisors,

I am writing to advocate for Mountain Lions in advance of the October 8th discussion on this keystone species. I am opposed to the upcoming letter to CDFW for the following reason:

There are currently thoughtful processes and methods in place for protecting ourselves, our pets and our livestock from Mountain Lion attacks that include non-lethal deterrence and Depredation. These methods and processes are based on years of research, feedback, and efficacy and should not be upended due to the recent attack in our county. Since 2000 there have been only 2 lethal attacks on humans in our state. What our county needs is education on these safety methods and processes. Please do not be swept up into this escalation of fear.

-Bonnie Doyle
1831 Red Fox Road
Placerville, CA 95667
hello@thevillaagave.com

From: Jennifer Calvin <jenniferjcalvin@gmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, October 5, 2024 8:44 PM
To: BOS-Clerk of the Board; LeeAnne Mila
Subject: Mountain Lion protection

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October 5, 2024

To: El Dorado County Board of Supervisors

330 Fair Lane, Building B

Placerville, CA 95667

RE: Legistar Item 24-1540; Agenda Item 29, October 8, 2024

Dear Supervisors,

I understand that a permit protecting mountain lions may be voted away in an upcoming meeting.

I do not think that any changes should be made to the current laws. They are very fair and reasonable.

Allowing people to kill mountain lions just because they see them and are afraid will create an unbalanced ecosystem.

Sincerely,
Jennifer Calvin

5480 Petersen Lane
Lotus , CA 95651

jenniferjcalvin@gmail.com

From: Josh Rosenau <jrosenau@mountainlion.org>
Sent: Saturday, October 5, 2024 11:47 PM
To: BOS-Clerk of the Board
Subject: Comment on Agenda item File # 24-1540
Attachments: 2024-09-25 EDC FW Commission.pdf

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Please consider the attached comments on the proposed letter regarding mountain lions that will be discussed at the October 8 board of supervisors meeting. We are always happy to speak with supervisors or others in the community if there are any questions.

Many thanks.

--

Josh Rosenau (he/him)
Director of Policy & Advocacy • Mountain Lion Foundation
mountainlion.org • 916-442-2666 ext. 107



MOUNTAIN LION FOUNDATION

Saving America's Lion

Our mission is to ensure America's lion survives and flourishes in the wild.

September 25, 2024

El Dorado County Fish and Wildlife Commission
El Dorado County
330 Fair Lane
Placerville, CA 95667

Re: Draft Opinion on Human/Cougar Conflict in El Dorado County

On behalf of the Mountain Lion Foundation and our members in El Dorado County, we write regarding the draft Opinion letter prepared by the El Dorado Fish and Wildlife Commission. We are writing to offer our support to a number of these recommendations, and to suggest ways that we can work with El Dorado County's leadership to bring them to fruition. Thank you for considering this input. Your letter highlights some important areas of scientific uncertainty, and we hope to work with you to reach out to the scientific community and policymakers to direct attention and funding to new research in these areas. The Opinion letter also offers policy recommendations that are based on existing scientific research. While we strongly agree with some of those policy recommendations, others seem to draw conclusions that are less well-grounded in that research, with troubling implications for public safety. We hope for a chance to discuss those areas in more detail, and we hope to work with you to refine those policy recommendations. Like you, our primary goal is to ensure not only the safety and wellbeing of people, their livestock and domestic animals, but also the health of the lands, waters, and wildlife of El Dorado County—a place where residents live alongside mountain lions.

Over the last several months, the Mountain Lion Foundation staff, volunteers, and partners have worked in and around El Dorado County to educate residents and prevent conflicts with wildlife. We have distributed brochures describing techniques and tools to protect livestock and pets from mountain lions and other carnivores, and we have worked with individuals in the community to develop strategies for their homesteads and their livestock's specific needs. We have hosted a number of public events and presentations to offer the best available science and tools to the community, and to provide an opportunity for questions and discussion about the community's concerns — and we have more coming up in the next couple of months. We have also had productive conversations with public officials, and are working to build relationships with the

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state and county officials who work directly with the community when mountain lions create concerns. If there are other ways that we can assist your commission's work, please don't hesitate to reach out.

Of the recommendations in the draft Opinion, the easiest for us to endorse is item 3, regarding wildlife feeding. The science is clear that mountain lions follow deer, and that practices which bring deer nearer to communities and homes can only increase the likelihood of mountain lion encounters. While such encounters are rarely dangerous, in the current moment of high tensions and legitimate concern, discouraging practices which increase the rate of encounters can only help. We would be happy to discuss ways to help with the educational campaign you describe and to lend our support to the proposed amendments to county ordinance.

We also support item 1 in your recommendations, calling for increased CDFW staffing, especially for conflict officers. State budget tightening has reduced conflict staffing throughout the state; we support restoring those positions and would be happy to discuss a coordinated effort to lobby for conflict funding in future state budgets. In the meantime, we will continue our current work with livestock owners in El Dorado County who experience such conflict. Our staff includes a fifth-generation rancher who has researched and successfully deployed carnivore deterrents in a wide range of environments and would be happy to speak with more El Dorado County residents who want to try out proven, successful livestock-prevention tools or who have questions or concerns. If there is a way to include our staff member's contact information among the resources you provide in those moments, please let me know and we will coordinate the best way to connect residents with that one-on-one support.

Our outreach efforts have already included Amador County, and we would be happy to assist in convening and coordinating discussions among north Sierra counties as discussed in item 2. Encouraging increased mountain lion research and research on conflict prevention by CDFW and its partners has been a high priority for us, and this would be an easy area to coordinate on. Public-private partnerships that allow expertise, resources, and lessons learned to be shared and deployed rapidly can be extremely valuable tools in addressing complex issues like mountain lion conflict.

Items 4 and 5 on your list of recommendations are more challenging. While Bart George's research in Washington state has been described in media reports and in Mr. George's podcast interviews and other venues, the research is not yet extensive or robust enough to earn publication in a peer-reviewed scientific journal. Basing policy on unpublished and unverified studies can be a risky move, especially when other, also-unpublished research exists that contradicts Mr. George's results. There is an intuitive appeal to the idea that nonlethal hazing

should “train” cougars to avoid human settlements, but strong evidence that such hazing is effective or necessary does not yet exist. While we applaud the goal of rooting policy in the best science, it is premature to turn this emerging research into policy.

The three step policy (which the Opinion refers to as “the three strike rule”) is a relatively new approach to conflict, and it has largely been effective across the state of California, including in other rural areas that have similarities to El Dorado County. While policy should be adaptive to new evidence and changing circumstances, the evidence described in your Opinion does not justify abandoning that approach, and indeed much of the evidence you cite actually argues *for* the merits of the three step policy’s emphasis on deterrence first. We look forward to a chance to discuss this science in more detail and discuss ways that the three step policy might be refined to address the realities of life in El Dorado County. In that conversation, it will be crucial to develop a shared understanding of the state of mountain lion science, and the science of coexisting with mountain lions.

Numerous research groups have attempted to assess the effects of reducing mountain lion populations, and found that without intensive effort, it is difficult to maintain mountain lion populations substantially below their carrying capacity. That carrying capacity is driven primarily by habitat availability and the deer population. In numerous studies, even intensive efforts to reduce mountain lion populations have shown little effect on deer populations, especially compared to the effects of disease and variation in habitat quality, not to mention the effects of climate — drought, harsh winters, hot summers — and wildfire. It is thus unlikely that marginal changes in CDFW’s policies would dramatically reduce that population.

As the Opinion observes, Kertson and Keren (2021), like other researchers, found that sightings or encounters are not an indication of a growing cougar population. While we appreciate and strongly support the Opinion’s call for more research on California’s mountain lion population and its regional distribution, and would happily discuss the nuances of how populations can best be estimated, there simply is not yet enough data to know for sure whether local mountain lion population sizes have changed significantly in recent years. Research also suggests that anecdotal reports of mountain lion sightings, and even owners’ determination of how missing domestic animals died, can be unreliable as indicators of mountain lion activity. We would of course be happy to discuss those data and the best ways to intake and respond to such reports to address the community’s valid concerns.

As the Opinion notes, El Dorado County has served as a “sink” habitat for mountain lions for quite some time. Dr. Dellinger’s published research on this draws not only on recent depredation responses, but also the history of bounty kills before that system was abolished over 50 years

ago. Sink populations are those where mortality rates exceed birth rates, and where population stability is maintained through the immigration of young, mostly male, mountain lions into the area. By contrast, in demographically stable mountain lion populations, established older individuals drive out those younger (mostly male) lions. This dynamic has a few important consequences when we discuss conflict.

First, young male mountain lions have more unpredictable behavior and are statistically those most prone to conflict. They are smaller and less experienced, and the fact that they travel long distances means they do not have local knowledge about the best areas to hunt their preferred prey (deer and elk), nor about areas to avoid (including dangerous road crossings or areas near humans). They also may be physically taxed from long-distance dispersal. All of this makes them less selective in their hunting and sometimes more likely to mistake domestic animals for an appropriate food source.

Second, those young mountain lions are less effective at maintaining their own territory. That means that a territory which one older individual might have maintained could be taken over in the short term by multiple younger individuals when that older one dies. Mountain lion biologists have been known to quip that “when one mountain lion dies, five more come to dinner.”

The consequence of these two facts is that high mortality rates (whether caused by hunting, authorized depredation responses, unauthorized “shoot, shovel, and shut up” poaching, or car strikes) can increase conflict rates and increase local population densities in that sink habitat. Dr. Dellinger’s paper concludes that past conflict removals are one of the strongest predictors of increased future conflict rates — and this point is especially relevant to El Dorado County. His conclusion matches peer-reviewed findings by other authors in other places and using different datasets, which provides a strong foundation for scientific inferences. There are strong scientific grounds to believe that the already high rates of mortality in El Dorado County may be driving any increase in conflict rates you have seen with domestic animals. If that is true, the policy implications differ from those proposed in this Opinion letter.

As Dr. Dellinger’s paper explains: “Most significantly, it appears that if small-scale agricultural operations and pet owners can improve animal husbandry standards with the purpose of mitigating depredation, depredation rates throughout California could decrease substantially and maybe even more than might be expected, as depredation rates are positively influenced by previous lethal removal.”

It is because of findings like Dr. Dellinger’s that the Mountain Lion Foundation’s work has focused on providing tools for nonlethal deterrence of carnivores, and on working with communities to promote peaceful coexistence between communities, livestock, and their

neighboring wilderness. It may seem counterintuitive that removing lions can lead to *more* conflict, but given the implications for public safety, this conclusion from decades of scientific research must be taken very seriously. Our fundamental goal is ensuring the safety and wellbeing of people, livestock, and wildlife such as mountain lions, and to do that, we are guided by the best scientific research. Reviewing your Opinion letter, it is clear that you are driven by those same desires, including an intention to ground your work and policies on the best available science. We look forward to discussing that science and the best way to turn it into effective action.

As noted above, the Mountain Lion Foundation stands ready to support many of the proposals offered in this Opinion letter. We look forward to continuing the work we've been doing in El Dorado County, especially where we can find ways to partner with El Dorado County's leadership and on-the-ground staff.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Brent Lyles', with a stylized flourish at the end.

R. Brent Lyles
Executive Director
(916) 442-2666 ext. 103
blyles@mountainlion.org

From: Kim Dawson
Sent: Sunday, October 6, 2024 10:55 AM
To: BOS-Clerk of the Board
Subject: Fw: Public Comment - October 8th BOS Meeting - Agenda Item 24-1540 - Mountain Lion Activity
Attachments: BOS Ltr to CDFW - Mountain Lions.docx

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From: bill.gainesandassociates.net <bill@gainesandassociates.net>
Sent: Sunday, October 6, 2024 10:03:45 AM
To: Kim Dawson <kim.dawson@edcgov.us>
Cc: LeeAnne Mila <leeanne.mila@edcgov.us>
Subject: Public Comment - October 8th BOS Meeting - Agenda Item 24-1540 - Mountain Lion Activity

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Attached, please find some suggested revisions to the draft BOS letter to CDFW Re: Statewide Mountain Lion Depredation Approach in El Dorado County.
October 8th BOS Meeting - Agenda Item 24-1540 - Mountain Lion Activity.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Bill

Bill Gaines, Principal



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Director Chuck Bonham

California Department of Fish and Wildlife

715 P Street

Sacramento, Ca. 94244

Re: Statewide Mountain Lion Depredation Approach in El Dorado County

In 2017, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) began to change how depredation permits were being administered statewide – starting with a 3-Step policy being implemented in the Santa Monica Mountains and Santa Ana Mountains. In March 2020, the 3-Step policy was expanded to include the larger proposed evolutionarily significant unit (ESU) proposed in a petition to the California Fish and Game Commission to list mountain lions under the California Endangered Species Act (CESA). This ESU encompasses an area stretching from San Francisco in the north to the Mexico border, and from I-5/I-15 in the east to the coast. On July 10, 2020, CDFW released a memorandum which revised their depredation permit approach for mountain lions outside of the boundaries of the proposed ESU. This approach outlined the process at length, but the key principles are in the first bullet points:

1. Upon request from a property owner that has suffered a livestock loss, a non-lethal Step 1 permit shall be issued – consistent with Fish and Game Code section 4801.5 – shall be issued that authorizes some element(s) of non-lethal take (e.g., pursuit, catch or capture or the attempt to pursue, catch or capture) along with protective enclosures or actions to protect livestock.
2. Should the property owner suffer a second loss and has implemented the non-lethal take measures authorized, the Regional Manager should analyze and determine whether additional non-lethal take measures and recommendations should be pursued, and, if so, issue a second non-lethal permit. If not, the Regional Manager documents when a second non-lethal permit is not feasible, then the Regional Manager has the discretion to either: (a) use a structured process to consider translocation; or (b) issue a lethal permit upon confirmation the property owner wishes to receive such a permit.

The implementation of this new policy dramatically changed mountain lion dynamics in El Dorado County. Prior to implementation of this change, the mountain lion population in El Dorado County was being managed to prevent human mountain lion conflicts, allowing coexistence. Data collected from 2001 until the change in depredation policy in July 2020 clearly shows our depredation permit requests versus mountain lions taken fluctuated, creating a managed population without hurting the overall distribution of these apex predators.

As our El Dorado County Fish and Wildlife Commission has written in their opinion on human/cougar conflict, implementation of this July 2020 policy should be “considered as an experiment that has failed in high conflict counties as depredations have increased”. Clearly El Dorado is a high conflict county with the most depredation permits issued. El Dorado County accounts for 17% of all permits issued for the period 2019-2023.

This CDFW management policy for mountain lions has put El Dorado County into crisis mode. Unprecedented numbers of livestock and domestic animals have been killed since the policy direction was given. Increasing human interactions with mountain lions that include stalking, school sightings, and the most tragic, a human death have occurred. We cannot continue on this trajectory. The county is concerned that this policy is inducing the high likelihood of another human attack. That cannot be the pathway that CDFW wants to follow.

A return to the approach for managing conflict prior to the 2020 policy is warranted. We request that the policy be set aside for El Dorado and a plan dealing with our high levels of conflict and depredation be implemented. Permits should be implemented in a timely fashion, not days or weeks after the occurrence. It should not be tied to a specific parcel, but an area. We need an organized approach with defined parameters that, when met, a lethal depredation permit shall be issued. The process should be timely and consistent and not be subject to the varying interpretations of the CDFW staff contacted about a particular incident on any given day. We also need to look at proactive hazing as an approach to help dishabituate cougars.

From: Sarah Canfield <canfield.sarah@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, October 6, 2024 3:22 PM
To: BOS-Clerk of the Board
Subject: Don't remove Mountain lion protections

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Honorable Supervisors,

I am writing to advocate for Mountain Lions in advance of the October 8th discussion on this keystone species. I am opposed to the upcoming letter to CDFW for the following reason:

There are currently thoughtful processes and methods in place for protecting ourselves, our pets and our livestock from Mountain Lion attacks that include non-lethal deterrence and Depredation. These methods and processes are based on years of research, feedback, and efficacy and should not be upended due to the recent attack in our county. Since 2000 there have been only 2 lethal attacks on humans in our state. What our county needs is education on these safety methods and processes. Please do not be swept up into this escalation of fear. Please protect important animal species and don't give in to old school biases that disregard the importance of predators in a healthy exp system. We have too many deer here in Coloma already, and killing the lions will increase deer and deer car impacts.

Sarah Canfield
Pob 394
441 Coloma Heights Road
Coloma 95613

From: Sharon Cavallo <sharonpcavallo@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, October 6, 2024 7:19 PM
To: BOS-Clerk of the Board
Subject: BOS Agenda Item 24-1540, Oct 8
Attachments: El Dorado BOS Letter.pdf

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Dear Clerk of the Board:

Please accept this public comment letter (see attachment) regarding Agenda Item 24-1540 on the October 8, 2024 Board of Supervisors agenda.

Thank you.

Sharon Cavallo

October 6, 2024

El Dorado County Board of Supervisors
330 Fair Lane
Placerville, CA 95667

RE: BOS Meeting, October 8, 2024
Legistar Item 24-1540, Agenda Item #29

Dear Supervisors,

As a 50 year resident of the rural foothills adjacent to El Dorado County, I am very concerned about your potential actions intended to reduce conflicts between residents and the mountain lion population. The letter to the Director of the CDFW that the Board is being asked to sign is not based on the recommendations of mountain lion biologists with scientific knowledge and expertise. It promotes the issuance of more lethal permits for cougars without requiring needed protective measures for livestock and pets. It assumes that the mountain lion population has exploded, that residents are not responsible for an increase in conflicts with lions, and that killing more lions will make them and their livestock safer.

None of these assumptions are based on scientific expertise. Social media (especially Facebook) has fueled panic in residents, asking them to post all lion sightings with locations and sometimes photos. These are mostly of cougars walking around at night, trying to survive, many likely to be the same lion looking for its natural wildlife prey. Trail and Ring cameras are relatively new - residents just didn't see the lions around until recently.

Research needs to be done on several factors before drastic changes to the CDFW policies are implemented. How many resident lions are there in El Dorado County? What is the deer population and where are they hanging out? Are people feeding deer and other wildlife that bring lions near their homes? Are residents taking available proactive measures to safeguard their animals? Why aren't deterrents being tried and evaluated? Did wildfires, drought or development reduce habitat for wildlife, especially cougars who prefer to avoid humans?

I join many other residents of rural counties in asking that our precious wildlife not be sacrificed in the name of management. Please ask for expert advice and research ways to reduce human/lion conflict before moving ahead with potentially harmful policy changes.

Sincerely,

Sharon P. Cavallo
2812 Stevens Drive
Auburn, CA 95602

From: Steven Ramme <rammes@hughes.net>
Sent: Monday, October 7, 2024 12:30 PM
To: BOS-Clerk of the Board
Subject: Mountain Lions

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To the Attention of:
EDC Board of Supervisors
FROM: Steven Ramme

As a property owner and resident of El Dorado County since 1982 I can testify to an unacceptable population increase in our backyards of mountain lions over the last decade. Before that it was a rare and exciting experience to see a lion. That's no longer the case. The EDC Trapper can testify to the uncontrolled and dangerous increase in the lion population. It's only a matter of time before another person is killed by a lion. My next door neighbor recently, 8/2/24, had 7 full grown sheep killed and left to lay, none eaten. Confirmed lion kills by the EDC Trapper. Thrill kills! It is now common for lion sightings, pet and livestock kills (and a person) everywhere in the County. I'm sure recent fires have contributed to the problem. It's not right for people to have to suffer a loss from a lion before they are allowed a depredation permit. As seen in the recent past, that loss could be a person. It is time for a limited and controlled extermination of mountain lions in our County. Consider an average litter of 3 kittens per year per adult female lion. Just say 100 females (there's much more than that) can produce 500 plus offspring in 3 or 4 years. How many years have lions been a protected species? Do the math. That's a lot of lions. The lion lovers scream about extinction and lions were here first. That's a bunch of baloney. They are Not extinct and humans have been here forever. Pioneers of this country controlled their environment best they could to make it safe for their families and neighbors and livestock. Human population increases are a factor just as lion population is. Protection of humans absolutely trumps mountain lions. It's time for us to take control of our environment. It's ludicrous to accept lions running around in downtown Placerville and frequent sightings in surrounding populated areas that are experiencing an alarming increase in pet and livestock killing. Lions have lost their fear and have no regard for the presence of humans. Please take the appropriate actions to help reduce the local lion population. You and Fish and Wildlife need to cooperate to protect your constituents and their property from the threat of death or injury from a lion.

S. R. Ramme
6818 Gods Way
Lotus, CA 95651

