

**MOUNTAIN LION MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES
FOR
LION DAU L-17
GAME MANAGEMENT UNITS
128, 129, 130, 133, 134, 135, 136, 141, 142, & 147**

Prepared for:
Colorado Division of Wildlife
Southeast Region

By:
Stan Abel
Terrestrial Wildlife Biologist
Pueblo, Colorado

INTRODUCTION

This management area plan will establish management guideline objectives for mountain lion populations in southeastern Colorado. Lion hunting and harvest will be adjusted when necessary in an effort to achieve the unit objective.

The goal of the CDOW is to maintain a healthy, self-sustaining population of mountain lion that is in balance with available habitat, minimize nuisance complaints, minimize game damage complaints and also maintain an environment that supports a rich, vegetative and wildlife community that will maintain a self-sustaining lion population.

Current studies related to deer fawn summer mortality and both fawn and adult winter mortality indicate that mountain lions are not a major factor in deer population regulation. Sport hunting will be used to harvest the lion population at a level that will allow maximum hunter opportunity and maintain a healthy, viable population of lions. Individual animals that cause excessive damage to livestock, personal property or pose a threat to human health and welfare will be removed as necessary. No control action, other than sport harvest, is anticipated to benefit deer or elk populations.

DESCRIPTION OF MANAGEMENT AREA AND HABITAT

This lion unit is located on the eastern plains of Colorado. It is composed of ten Game Management Units (GMU) that include GMUs 128, 129, 130, 133, 134, 135, 136, 141, 142, and 147. The CDOW designation of this lion Data Analysis Unit is L-17.

It is bounded on the north by the Arkansas River; on the east by Colo. 101, the Bent-Las Animas improved road, the Bent-Las Animas County line, and Colo. 109; on the south by US Highway 160; on the west by I-25.

Vegetative communities include short grass prairie (Comanche National Grasslands), riparian, and desert.

December 4, 2000

Agricultural practices include mostly open range cattle grazing with some irrigated hayfields and row crops in riparian areas. The Purgatoire, Apishipa, and Huerfano River canyons provide significant habitat for lion prey species. These eastern units have supported minimal lion harvest over time and permission to hunt is often difficult to obtain.

HARVEST SUMMARY:

1988 through 1997	Total harvest	4
	Sport harvest	4
	Total males in harvest	3
	<u>Total females in harvest</u>	<u>1</u>
10-year average annual harvest		0.4

Harvest quota is set by a grouping of Game Management Units. Several units (123, 124, 125, 126, 127, 132, 138, 139, 145, & 146) do not occur in an established mountain lion DAU and are included with the units for L-17 for setting the harvest quota.

L-18 Units (137, 143, & 144) are also included for the purposes of setting a harvest quota, however harvest for L-18 is separated.

1997 harvest quota for L-17 except units 128, 133, and 134	10
1997 harvest quota for Units 128, 133, and 134	4

There have been a total of 4 lions killed in this DAU over the last 10 years.

HARVEST OBJECTIVE:

- Maintain current harvest quota for 3-5 years.
- Monitor harvest rates.
- Monitor unit of harvest for contribution to total harvest.
- Maintain existing harvest levels over time with existing harvest quota.

DISCUSSION:

- The large number of units in this DAU obviously covers a lot of ground. Mountain lions utilize canyon lands, which provide the best habitat and prey base.
- Certain units may contribute a high percentage of total harvest, however at the current harvest rates it is unlikely to be detrimental to the lion population.
- There is no indication there are fewer lions now than in the last ten years.

GAME DAMAGE OBJECTIVE: Two damage claims were filed in this DAU for the last ten years, one for \$50 and the other for \$1,895. The infrequent occurrence of claims makes an average damage objective difficult. Using the highest claim from 1996-1997, mountain lion damage should not exceed \$2,000 in any given year.

PRESCRIPTIONS:

- Focus on individual lion causing damage.
- Direct Wildlife Services to remove lions in significant livestock depredations.
- Capture and re-locate offending lion.
- Monitor and educate.
- Utilize licensed hunter if conditions allow.

HUMAN/LION CONFLICT OBJECTIVE: The number of human/lion conflicts in this DAU has not been documented. They are presumed to be very low based on the number of claims and low harvest rates.

An occasional offending lion could account for several complaints in one year.

An estimate of 4 human/lion conflict reports per year is the recommended objective.

PRESCRIPTIONS:

- Document reports of human/lion conflict.
- Confirm and document lion sightings.
- Provide information to the public, livestock owners, and land use agencies.
- Conduct site visits; offer professional advice and literature.
- Consider non-lethal options, case by case.