

We don't need to hunt cougars to manage them

Richard P. Reading, PhD
Letter to the Editor
Grand Junction Daily Sentinel
October 19, 2024

As a PhD wildlife biologist and vice chair of the Colorado Parks and Wildlife Commission I urge a YES vote on Proposition 127.

If you embrace the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation, which guides wildlife agencies across the U.S. and Canada, you must vote yes on Proposition 127. That model, much heralded for its conservation successes, clearly states that hunting must involve “fair chase,” and that wildlife cannot be commodified. Proposition 127 bans chasing mountain lions with dogs, in which the “hunter” follows the GPS signal from the dogs’ collars to a treed lion, walks up and shoots the animal. That is not hunting, and something we would never allow with ungulates (animals with hooves). Similarly, bobcats are trapped not for personal use, but for the sale of their fur for sale to buyers from outside the U.S. — the very definition of commodification.

Opponents of proposition 127 argue that we must allow our agency to professionally and scientifically manage wildlife. Nothing in proposition 127 prevents the agency from doing that; it simply sets the ground rules by which the agency operates. We already do that. We do not permit use of night lights and baiting, for example. Yes, we may have to change some management, but our professionals at CPW are up to the task.

The literature is clear that lions self-regulate their populations, so a surplus of lions is highly unlikely. More research shows that lions

do not suppress deer and elk populations, likely because they are self-regulating. Instead, lions do us a great service by removing sick and injured animals from populations, such as those infected with Chronic Wasting Disease.

Our cats deserve the same protections and guidelines as our other species in Colorado – managed with science and ethics. A YES vote on Proposition 127 encompasses both.

The views expressed in this letter are my own, as a private citizen and should not be construed to represent the Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) Commission. CPW is neutral on Proposition 127.

RICHARD P. READING, PhD Denver