

# Vote no on 127 to continue proper management of lions

Jerry Apker  
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During the final 17 years of my 38-year career with Colorado Parks and Wildlife, I proudly served Colorado's communities and wildlife as the agency's carnivore biologist. In this capacity, I helped to craft the management strategies for bobcat and mountain lion populations. Since my retirement, the professionals at CPW have continued to improve management of these animals with their decades of professional and academic experience.

Proposition 127 will irreparably harm wild felid management by banning hunting, the best tool to manage these populations. Prop 127 would also harm the agency and its professionals who have dedicated their lives to maintaining healthy and abundant wildlife in Colorado. Yet, out-of-state extremists still wish to support the ballot measure. If successful, who will cover the costs to manage human-lion conflicts, or the costs when lions kill livestock, your neighbor's goats or kill alpacas at the organic wool producer down the road? Who will cover the costs of the research that has advanced our knowledge and improved your appreciation for these wild animals?

Hunters, through license fees and excise taxes, pay for it now. Voting yes on Prop 127 will wipe that away.

If approved, Proposition 127 will widen the polarization between urban and rural Colorado. As a resident of rural Colorado, I greatly enjoy mountain living and the deep bonds with nature my family and my fellow rural Coloradans form. As such, I can't help but feel frustrated when urban residents attempt to implement statewide wildlife policy that will disproportionately impact communities like mine.

In November, you will be asked to become an armchair biologist and decide whether hunting bobcats and mountain lions shall continue. Looking back on my nearly four decades of experience, I can confidently say that without hunting, there would not be the abundance of wildlife that there are in Colorado today.

During my tenure with CPW, Colorado grew from 2.5 million people to nearly 6 million today. In that same time, mountain lions and bobcats have also responsibly increased thanks to wise management. During my tenure at CPW, we developed management plans, objectives and population monitoring strategies that are anchored in scientific wildlife management.

We embarked on research projects to more deeply understand predator/ prey relationships and how hunting modulates lion populations. I had to investigate the fatal attack on one of our young citizens, a high schooler in Idaho Springs. My involvement in helping the state develop managed coexistence strategies was inspired by the deep desire to help Colorado have abundant lions that are well and safely managed. In the book, "Managing Cougars in North America,"

I wrote a chapter that provides guidance to wildlife management agencies for managing human-lion conflicts. Through my experience, I can confidently say that in a vastly human-altered landscape, lions and bobcats need managed care through a well-funded program overseen by brilliant, experienced wildlife professionals.

Phrases like “trophy hunting” and “unethical hunting” are the stock in trade of extremists seeking to defeat our scientific wildlife management through misinformation. The fact is hunting just for a trophy and leaving meat to waste has been a felony violation in Colorado since I began my career as a wildlife officer. Conversely, lion hunters are legally required to care for lion meat just as they would if they hunted and killed a deer.

There is also no truth to the assertions made by supporters of Prop 127 that mountain lions control the spread of Chronic Wasting Disease in our deer herds. Credible research proves that actual predation has no effect on the spread or suppression of CWD.

While it is true that predators will more often kill sickly prey, deer can be infected with CWD for years before exhibiting wasting symptoms. These symptom-less animals shed infectious prions into the environment long before they die by fang and claw. This is just another red-herring from the proponents.

The greatest help you can offer for wild felid management in Colorado is to join me in voting no on Proposition 127.

*Jerry Apker is a retired wildlife biologist. His 38-year career with Colorado Parks and Wildlife he served as a wildlife officer, wildlife officer supervisor, and during 17 years of his career he was Colorado’s carnivore biologist, responsible for mountain lion and bobcat management matters. He lives in Monte Vista, Colorado.*



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