February 13, 2020 Delta CPW Mountain Lion Management Plan Public meeting

Notes from Judith Lopez

CPW had an Outreach Mtg at Heddles Rec Center. A lot of CPW staff attended including apparently all the District Wildlife Mangers in this area. They are doing Outreach Meetings this month on the Western Slope. In March the Draft Plan will be available and there will be 30 days for comment. I signed up to get that plan. In June it will go to the Commissioners for Final Approval. They are fast tracking this and expect the plan to be in place in 2021. I did not count the number of attendees but there were very few seats empty in the room.

**Changes**:

The new plan will have only two DAU, Data Analysis Units, Southwest and Northwest. These will be managed on a regional scale. The NW has four harvest limit groups while the SW has seven. There is also one SMA, special management area where the rules will be different. Previously each of these GMU, game management units had their individual harvest limits and would be closed down for hunting once it was reached. Under the new plan the limits will be at the DAU level, making management a lot less complex for CPW. A number of slides were shown that documented the yearly allowed harvest levels for each of future management areas and what had actually been harvested. In all cases the actual kills were well below what was allowed for the whole area. So there intention is that this plan will let the hunters get a lot more lions and get closer to the harvest limits.

CPW reports they are trying to manage for stability at a larger scale as lions travel through much larger areas than most other animals like Elk. They are trying to provide a more consistent framework for management that will be put in place on the Western Slope first and then go statewide later.

CPW provided information that was reported to be the Biological Foundation for their plan.

 **RSF Resource Selection Function**: this was their attempt to model population projection of independent lions in each region; as they are not able to count lions they used formulas to attempt to determine how many are likely in areas considering habitat, prey availability etc. This is an important point as the number that can be harvested is based on a percentage of the guestimate of what the total population is.

 CPW reported using scientific literature concerning what was the total human-caused mortality rates shown to maintain stable population

 CPW then set Proposed Mortality Thresholds. They set 17% of population cannot be exceeded, however, this will be looked at on a 3 year average in each region. So exceeding it in one year won't automatically shut down hunting. However, studies have shown that harvesting 20 to 25% of adult females leads to a suppression of population. So they have proposed a threshold in each region of no more than 22% for adult females. If that is exceeded, it will lead to a decrease of the total allowed to 16%. Vulnerability to harvest when using hounds to hunt the lions varies for different gender and age class of lions. Young males move more and lay down more tracks for the hounds to follow; adult females lay down the least. So they are allowing the use of hounds because in states that didn't, a higher percentage of females were harvested.

CPW uses a tooth from each harvested lion to track the age of what has been harvested. They have been doing this since 2009.Their data have shown that in the NW region from 2009 to 2018 they had 15 to 20% of the harvest being adult females. In the SW regions the percentage was higher.

There were questions about whether depredated females counted in the numbers for limits.

I believe the answer was that they count in the determination of the 17% but not the 22%. There was concern in the meeting expressed about over harvesting. There was doubt expressed about the total numbers projected to be in the area according to the method CPW using to determine this. CPW reported they have three current projects in Colorado monitoring lion density on the ground. They report they know the gender and age of each lion that has been harvested and whether they have had kits. However, they don't know stats on ones that died of other causes. I was told after the meeting by the speaker that mountain lions can have litters any time of the year unlike most other species hunted that are more specific in times when they have young. So in the hunting season if an adult female is killed you may be killing not only the female but her young as well due to the loss of the mother.

Glenwood Spring SMA, special management area:

 This area within the NW management area will have special rules. The goal here is to prioritize managing for human health and safety concerns. The harvest limits will be higher. They will allow electronic calls, not currently allowed anywhere. This has not been approved yet. This is proposed because in this area often cannot use hounds due to small areas with private land.

There was concern expressed by the attending group that area 61 in the SW in particular will be over hunted if it won't shut down until the whole region is shut down. They were concerned that breeding females will be over hunted in this area and that it will have long-term effects on population stability. There were comments that indicated that some members of the group thought this plan was designed to make CPW's work easier but was not going to be beneficial to the lion population stability.