

Cougar Safety Team Status Update February 19, 2021

Eric Gardner
Director, Wildlife Program



Washington
Department of
**FISH and
WILDLIFE**

May 2020

Goal: People feel safe in Cougar Country

Objective: Manage cougars while being trusted to take action to help people feel safe

Underway

Beginning stages

New work

OUTREACH

WDFW provides tools to safely live in cougar country

Refine overarching public safety communication strategy

Refine digital communication: videos, live events, blogs

Build on existing models to work with community

- Reduce deer feeding
- Improve husbandry
- Living with cougars safety messages

RESPONSIVE TO PUBLIC

Refine internal protocols to be more responsive

- Review Dangerous Wildlife Response Policy
- Imp. improved dangerous wildlife response matrix

Improve internal reporting between Wildlife Program and Enforcement to: track incidents, focus response efforts, and inform the public

Continue development of Cougar Pursuit/Hound Training WAC

SCIENCE INFORMS DECISIONS

Complete research on cougars: Provide relevant research

- WDFW (Pred/Prey; West side)
- Non-WDFW (Kalispel Tribe's cougar study)

Create science communication forum to share findings

Implement Option 4, review outcomes in hunting seasons 2020

- Initiate review of GMP In May 2021 ensure adequate flexibility related to recreational hunting (18 month process)

PARTNERSHIPS

Continue to build partnerships with sheriffs, Enforcement and Conflict staff

Reinvigorate partnerships with local elected commissions and NGOs: focus on shared goals

Begin revision process for WAC 220-440-030 Public Safety Cougar Removal, using an external working group

- Review recs from previous effort: Hound training opportunity and Wildlife feeding regulation

The Team

Team Sponsor:

Amy Windrope - DEPUTY DIRECTOR

Team Lead:

Eric Gardner - WILDLIFE PROGRAM DIRECTOR

Director's Office Members:

Steve Pozzanghera – REGION 1 DIRECTOR

Kessina Lee – REGION 5 DIRECTOR

Samantha Montgomery - COMMUNICATIONS CNSLT 5

- **15 Virtual Meetings: June 17, 2020 thru February 17**

Wildlife Program Members:

Mick Cope - DEPUTY PROGRAM DIR

Jerry Nelson - CHIEF SCIENTIST

Anis Aoude - GAME DIVISION MANAGER

Dan Brinson - NATURAL RESOURCE SCIENTIST 4 –
CONFLICT SECTION MANAGER

**Scott McCorquodale – REGION 3 WILDLIFE
PROGRAM MANAGER**

Richard Beausoleil - F&W BIOLOGIST 4 –
BEAR/COUGAR SPECIALIST

**Stephanie Simek – NATURAL RESOURCE SCIENTIST
4 – CARNIVORE SECTION MANAGER**

Enforcement Members:

Steve Bear - CHIEF

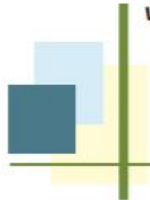
Paul Golden - DEPUTY CHIEF

Alan Myers – CAPTAIN

Rebecca Bennett - COMM OUTREACH &
ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION SPECIALIST 4

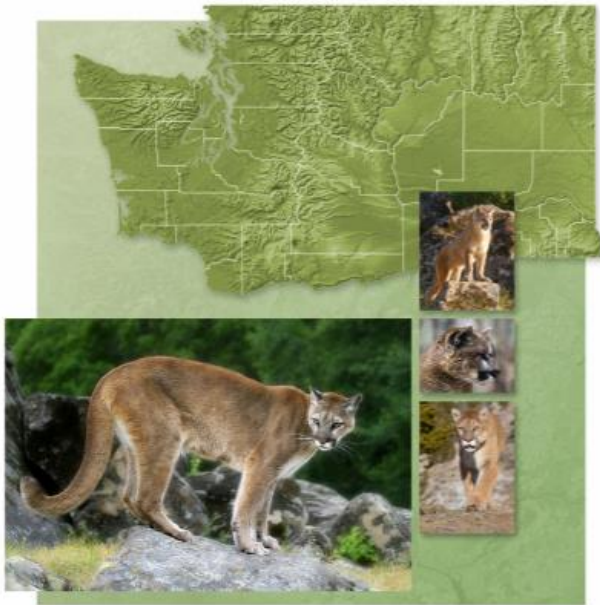
Outreach

WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE



Cougar Outreach and Education in Washington State

November 2010



Prepared for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife by Insight Wildlife Management



Wildlife Program
600 Capitol Way North
Olympia, Washington 98501-1091
Phone: (360) 902-2515
Email: wildthing@dfw.wa.gov

- Cougar strategic communications plan update
 - Videos
 - Predator/Prey Project video
 - News interviews
 - Proactive media outreach
 - Pamphlet revamped
 - Social media content creation
 - Living with cougars toolkit
 - Community-focused communications

Outreach

Communications plan executive summary

The plan's goals include:

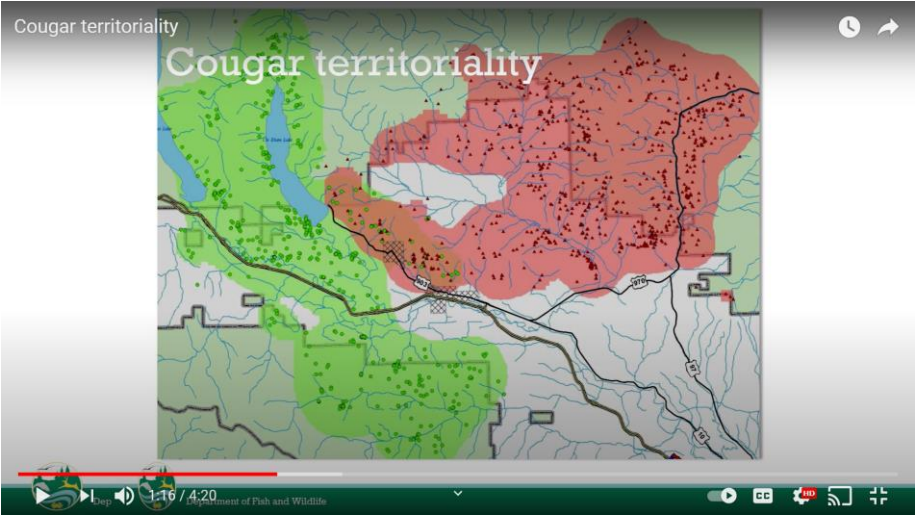
- increasing the public's awareness of human safety
- protection of property so that the cougar complaint rate is steady or declining
- increase understanding of cougar ecology, behavior, safety awareness, and coexistence in cougar country safety outreach at the community level



Outreach



Rich Beausoleil
Washington Dept. of Fish & Wildlife



Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife Published by Samantha Montgomery · December 1, 2020

It may be interesting to guess the age of the cougar you harvest based on the size and sex. It might be a kitten, sub-adult — less than two-years-old — or an adult. But, you (and we) can't be sure about an animal's age without closer inspection and tooth data.

Check out this blog about the differences between field aging and tooth data, and how we use the data to understand cougar age structure.

<https://wdfw.medium.com/using-cougar-tooth-data-to...>

WDFW.MEDIUM.COM

Using cougar tooth data to understand the cougar age structure on the landscape
It may be interesting to guess the age of the cougar you harvest based on the size and sex. It ...

24,935 People Reached 2,305 Engagements **Boost Post**

103 220 Comments 9 Shares

Feeding wild deer, elk, and moose — are you helping?



Outreach

Compartir los bosques con los pumas

- Con frecuencia, se confunde a los linceos con los pumas. Aprenda identificar a ambas especies.
- No alimente a gatos salvajes o silvestres. Recuerde que los depredadores siguen a la presa, así que nunca alimente a un ciervo o un uapití, ni les permita ponerse cómodos en su patio.
- Mantenga a los perros y gatos en el interior desde el atardecer hasta el amanecer.
- Mientras las caminatas, sea ruidoso y amarre a su perro. Está alerta de su entorno.
- Si se topa con un cadáver de ciervo, aléjese por el mismo camino. Un puma puede regresar para alimentarse de él.
- Si ve un puma, enfrentelo. Háblele con firmeza mientras se aleja lentamente. Intente parecer más grande que el puma. Siempre déjele al animal una ruta de escape. Nunca corra, ¡nunca!
- Recuerde que los ataques de pumas a humanos son extremadamente raros.

Si tiene preguntas o inquietudes sobre el control de la vida silvestre, comuníquese con el Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife (Departamento de Pesca y Vida Silvestre de Washington). En las hojas informativas "Living with Wildlife" (Vivir con la vida silvestre) puede encontrar más información.

Что делать при встрече с пумой в лесу

- Рысей часто ошибочно принимают за пум. Узнайте, как различать оба вида.
- Не кормите диких животных или диких кошек. Помните, что хищники преследуют добычу, поэтому никогда не кормите оленей или лосей и не обеспечивайте им комфортные условия в своем дворе.
- Держите собак и кошек в помещении в период от заката до рассвета.
- Во время прогулки издавайте шум и держите собаку на поводке. Отдавайте себе отчет в том, кто вас окружает.
- Если вы наткнулись на тушу оленя, уходите тем же путем, которым пришли. Пума может вернуться, чтобы съесть ее.
- Столкнувшись с пумой, повернитесь к ней лицом. Говорите с ней твердо, медленно отступая. Постарайтесь казаться крупнее, чем пума. Всегда оставляйте животному путь к бегству. Никогда не бегите! Никогда!
- Помните, что пумы нападают на людей крайне редко.

Если у вас возникли вопросы или проблемы, связанные с природопользованием, обращайтесь в Департамент охраны рыбных ресурсов и дикой природы штата Вашингтон. Дополнительную полезную информацию можно



City of Bellevue partnership example Languages translated: Chinese, Korean, Spanish, Russian

Sharing the Woods with Cougars

- Bobcats are frequently misidentified as cougars. Learn how to identify both species.
- Don't feed wildlife or feral cats. Remember that predators follow prey, so never feed deer or elk or let them be comfortable in your yard.
- Keep dogs and cats indoors from dusk to dawn.
- While hiking, be noisy and leash your dog. Be aware of your surroundings.
- If you happen upon a deer carcass, leave the way you came in. A cougar may return to feed on it.
- If you see a cougar, face it. Talk to it firmly while slowly backing away. Try to appear larger than the cougar. Always leave the animal an escape route. Never run - ever!
- Remember that cougar attacks on humans are extremely rare.

For wildlife management questions or concerns, please contact the Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife. Their "Living with Wildlife" fact sheets have additional helpful information.

쿠거와 함께 살아가기

- 보브캣을 쿠거와 혼동하는 경우가 많습니다. 두 종을 식별하는 방법을 숙지하십시오.
- 야생동물이나 야생 고양이에게 절대 먹이를 주지 마십시오. 포식자들은 먹이를 따라다니기 때문에 절대 사슴이나 엘크에게 먹이를 주거나 여러분 마당에서 편안하게 있게 해서는 안 됩니다.
- 해질녘부터 동틀녘까지는 반려견과 반려묘가 실내에 있도록 해야 합니다.
- 등산을 하는 경우에는 크게 소리를 내고 반려견에게는 반드시 목줄을 채우십시오. 주변 환경을 숙지해 두십시오.
- 사슴의 사체를 우연히 발견하게 되는 경우에는 그대로 두십시오. 쿠거가 사슴의 사체를 먹기 위해 돌아올 수 있습니다.
- 쿠거를 보게 되는 경우에는 직접 대면하십시오. 천천히 뒤로 물러나면서 단호하게 말씀하십시오. 쿠거보다 몸집이 더 커 보이게 하십시오. 항상 쿠거의 대피로를 마련해 놓으십시오. 절대 뛰어서는 안 됩니다!
- 쿠거가 사람들을 공격하는 경우는 상당히 드뭅니다.

야생동물 관리와 관련된 질문이나 우려사항이 있으실 경우에는 워싱턴 어류 및 야생동물 관리국으로 연락해 주십시오. '야생동물과 함께 살기' 자료에는

與美洲獅同處，共享森林之美

- 山貓時常被誤認為美洲獅。學習如何分辨兩個物種。
- 請勿餵養野生動物或野貓。謹記，捕食者會跟著獵物，因此切勿餵食鹿或麋鹿，或讓它們在您的後院自在行動。
- 讓狗和貓全天都待在家裏。
- 在遠足時，保持發出噪聲，並拴住狗。注意身邊環境。
- 如果遇上鹿的尸體，請從原路返回。美洲獅可能會回來進食。
- 如果遇到美洲獅，面對它。語氣堅定地與它談話，同時慢慢後退。試著讓自己看著比美洲獅更強大。記得給動物留下逃離的路線。別跑一千萬別！
- 謹記，美洲獅襲擊人類十分罕見。

若對野生動物管理有任何疑問或疑慮，請聯絡華盛頓魚類與野生動物部門。該部門的「與野生動物共生」概況手冊中，記錄有更多的幫助資訊。

Outreach

Media outreach methods and tools include:

- Internal staff communications
- Cougar safety community kits
- Videos
- Live webinar with chat feature
- Targeted social media ads
- Blog posts
- News releases
- Interviews to media
- One-on-one meetings with specific groups

Life of the Cougar

Physical Characteristics
Cougars are graceful and majestic animals known for their strength and agility. The images and chart to the right show color and physical attributes of adults and kittens, and size differences between adult male and female cougars.

Reproduction & Life Span
Cougars may breed at any time of year although most births occur in July and August, after about three months' gestation. Females can have their first litter at two and one-half to three years of age, and breed roughly every two years. Breeding pairs spend only a short time together, and males play no role in the rearing of young.
A mother cougar leaves kittens for brief periods when she hunts for food, but as the kittens grow, she takes them with her as she ventures out further across her home range.
In the wild, adult male cougars typically live for 10 to 12 years while females live somewhat longer. Hunting of cougars is the main cause of death for adult cougars. Other causes of death include males fighting other males for territory, collisions with motor vehicles, poaching, injuries sustained while hunting, disease, and old age.

Thick, long, black-tipped tail.
The tail measures about one-third of the cougar's body length and serves to counter-balance the cougar's movements as it pivots and pounces and breaks across the landscape.

The coats of kittens have blackish-brown spots.
Spots begin to fade to dapples at about 12 to 14 weeks, and disappear completely in about 18 months.

The pelage, or coat of adult cougars, is uniformly colored tawny, grey-brown, or red-brown.

Characteristic black "moustache" and long whiskers.

Distribution & Range
Washington State has about 20,000 square miles of cougar habitat. Cougars are highly adaptable, living in terrain ranging from forested lowlands to rugged and remote mountainous areas. Cougar habitat includes steep canyons, rock outcroppings and boulders, dense brush, or forests.
A male cougar's home range averages 100 to 200 square miles and typically encompasses all or part of 2 to 4 female home ranges.
In Washington, female cougar ranges are usually 50 to 75 square miles in size. There can be some overlap between male ranges, and also among female ranges, but usually there are fewer than 4 cougars per 100 square miles of suitable habitat.

Communication
Cougars communicate through visual, olfactory (scent), postural signals, and vocalizations such as low guttural growls, spitting, snarls, and howling. Cougar mothers growl or hiss when their kittens are threatened. Nursing cubs emit high-pitched, birdlike chirps and meows. Cougars also purr when together. Older cubs and adults emit whistles. Other sounds include an "oach" call, and a yawn.
The most spectacular sound is that of a cougar catenawled, which is an eerie sound that can resemble the cry of a human. Catenawled sounds are made by females during mating season, especially when males are competing for the same receptive female.

Male Data: Shoulder height: 30 in. (75 cm), Length, nose to tip of tail: 70 in. (177.8 cm), Weight: 100-150 lbs. (45-68 kg)

Adult Female: Shoulder height: 24 in. (61 cm), Length, nose to tip of tail: 53-58 in. (134-147 cm), Weight: 50-70 lbs. (23-32 kg)

The First Year

Month 1: Gestation & Birth Gestation is 92 days with 1 to 4 kittens possible, but the average is 2. They are spotted and weigh just over a pound.	Month 2: 2 weeks old Eyes and ears open. Mother leaves for short periods of time to hunt.	Month 3: 6 to 8 weeks old As kittens grow, they accompany their mother on hunts.	Month 4: 4 to 12 months Spots on fur turn to dapples, which continue to fade. Juveniles disperse at 18 months to establish their own territories.
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Cougar Safety Tips Take these precautions while living or recreating in cougar country. Carry bear spray whenever you recreate outdoors, know how to use it, and keep it readily available. Never store bear spray in a backpack.

Discover Washington's COUGARS

Western Wildlife OUTREACH

Learn about cougar behavior, ecology, signs, and important safety tips.

Washington Department of FISH and WILDLIFE



Responsive to the Public

Evaluation of Agency Dangerous Wildlife Policy and Procedure

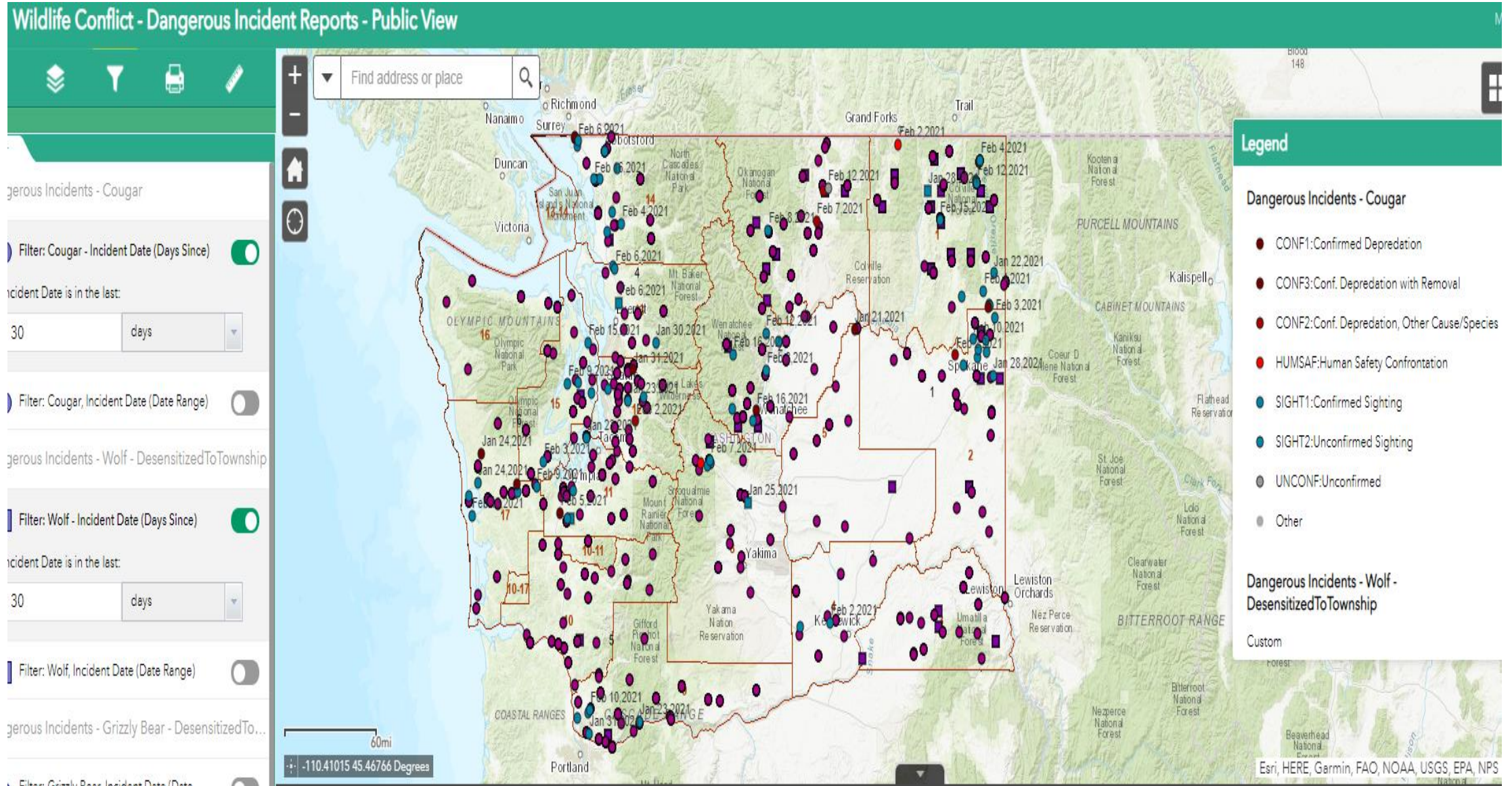
- Describes agency response to public reports of interactions, primarily with cougar and bear
- Existing policy is dated – plan is to update and clarify roles and responsibilities
- Cross-Program Working Group – Assembled and tackling Dangerous Wildlife policy and procedures updates.

Database improvements – Enforcement and Wildlife Program

- CODY RMS - Problem Wildlife Confirmation Codes Broadened for Improved Reporting
- Added Access to Cody RMS for all Wildlife Conflict Specialists
- Improved Officer Reporting Criteria for All Cougar Related Calls
- Building Improved Reporting Procedures into New Spillman RMS
- Practical application – identify areas needing focused attention



Practical Applications



Responsive to the Public

Non-Lethal Pursuit Pass Training Program

- Cougar Safety Team coordinated the finalization of the WAC language– provided input and recommendations
- Working Dogs CR-102 WAC approved by Commission January 29, 2021

Next Steps

- Cross-Program engagement through the Cougar Safety Team and focused meetings
- Once codified internal procedural requirements will take place generating the program procedures and guidelines.



Responsive to the Public

2020 Regional After Action Reviews (AAR's) for the Purpose of:

- ✓ Acknowledging the Good Work of Regional Staff and Understanding Why Regional Responses can Vary
- ✓ Identifying Areas Where Consistency can Help Us Improve
- ✓ Identifying Areas Where Change/Additional Actions May be Needed

The AAR's :

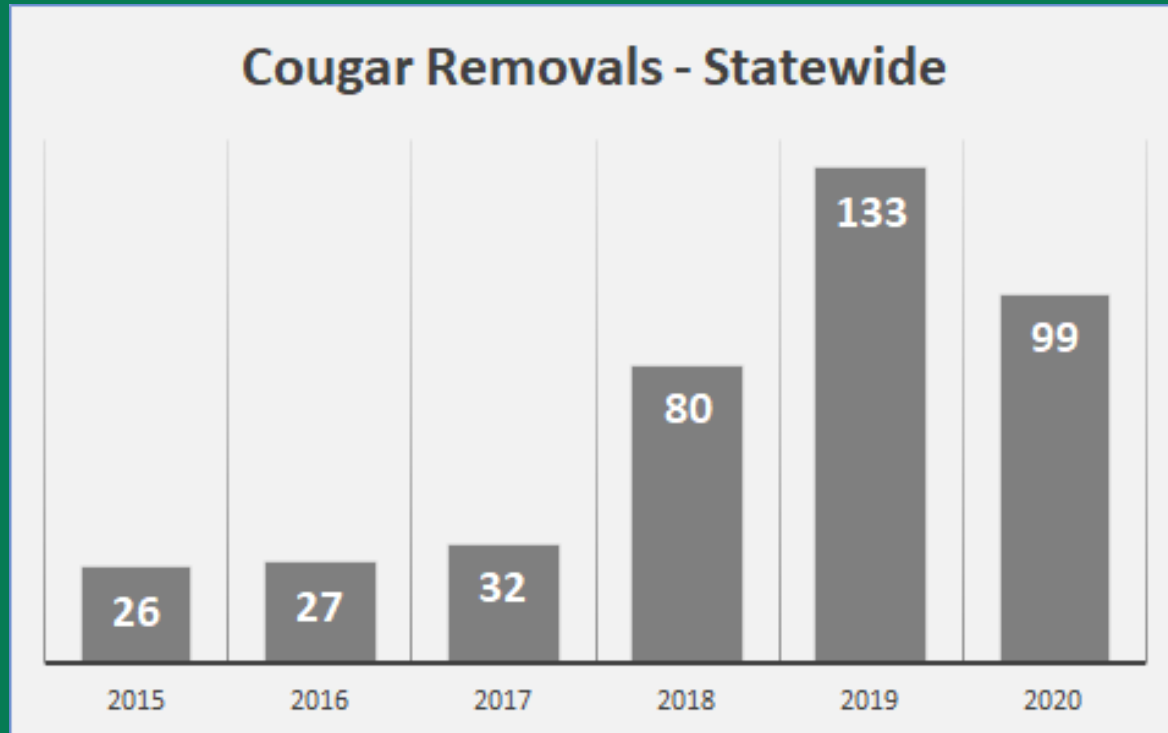
- Assigned to RD's on 12/29/20
- Five of Six Regional AAR's Have Been Completed – RD Consolidation of Input Currently Underway
- Summaries/Recommendations to be Complete by 4/15/21 (Includes Discussion and Input at two CST Meetings and an EMT Meeting)

2019/2020
Enforcement
Cougar Call
Data

Cougar Calls		
Region	2019	2020
R1	352	312
R2	162	122
R3	86	99
R4	101	118
R5	129	93
R6	262	161
Total	1092	905

Cougar Calls Responded To		
Region	2019	2020
R1	209	178
R2	93	70
R3	54	74
R4	72	69
R5	87	47
R6	165	95
Total	680	533

Cougars Removals In Response to Public Safety



Cougar Removals by Region

Region	2019	2020	2021 *Feb 15 th
R1	70	69	0
R2	10	14	0
R3	6	4	0
R4	11	3	0
R5	17	6	0
R6	19	3	1
	133	99	1

Science Informing Decisions

Science Review Panel

- To review research papers that address cougar conflict
- Inform policy makers and management decisions regarding which research is most applicable

Deliverable

- Report that ranks the scientific rigor and the utility of the literature reviewed

Timeline

- Fall 2021



Science Informing Decisions Underway and Future Work

- Assemble the peer-reviewed literature and agency professional reports from the last 15 years that speak to cougar conflict
- Assess literature as to what questions the authors attempted to address and how well they accomplished the task
- Assess the literature in terms of scientific rigor
- Identify which works speculate (without data) on topics the authors really didn't try to address
- Identify research questions of interest that haven't been adequately addressed to-date



Science Informing Decisions

COUGAR CONFLICT SCIENCE REVIEW TEAM

WDFW

Anis Aoude

- Game Division Manager

Scott McCorquodale

- Regional Program Manager

Stephanie Simek

- Carnivore Section Manager

Brian Kertson

- Carnivore Research Scientist

Rich Beausoleil

- Bear and Cougar Specialist

Jerry Nelson

- Science Division Manager

External collaborators

Chuck Anderson

Mammal Research Section Leader
Colorado Parks and Wildlife

Mark Hurley

Wildlife Research Manager
Idaho Fish and Game

Glen Sargent

Research Wildlife Biologist
USGS Northern Prairie Research Center

Bruce Johnson

Wildlife Research Scientist
Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
(ret.)



External
Working
Group
Committee

- Evaluate need and scope
- Identify roles and workload
- Develop Charter

Partnerships



Objective: Manage cougars while being trusted to take action to help people feel safe

Beginning Stages
Underway
Future Work

OUTREACH

WDFW provides tools to safely live in cougar country and reflect regional differences

Refine overarching public safety communication strategy

Refine digital communication: videos, live events, blogs

Build on existing models to work with communities to:

- Reduce deer feeding
- Improve husbandry
- Deliver living with cougars safety messages

RESPONSIVE TO PUBLIC

Refine internal protocols to be more responsive

- Review Dangerous Wildlife Response Policy
- Implement improved dangerous wildlife response matrix

Improve internal reporting between Wildlife Program and Enforcement to:

- track incidents
- focus response efforts, and
- inform the public

Continue development of Cougar Pursuit/Hound Training WAC

SCIENCE INFORMS DECISIONS

Complete research on cougars: Provide relevant research:

- WDFW (Pred/Prey; West side)
- Non-WDFW (Kalispel Tribe's cougar study)
- Explore methods for improved pop estimates

Create science communication forum to share findings

Implement Option 4, review outcomes in hunting seasons 2020

- Initiate review of GMP in May 2021 ensure adequate flexibility related to recreational hunting (18-month process)

PARTNERSHIPS

Continue to build partnerships with sheriffs, Enforcement, and Conflict staff

Reinvigorate partnerships with local elected commissions and NGOs: focus on shared goals

Form external working group

Begin revision process for WAC 220-440-030 Public Safety Cougar Removal, using an external working group

- Review recs from previous effort: Hound training opportunity and Wildlife feeding regulation

Next Steps - Timeline

WHEN	NEXT STEP
February - April	After Action Review Summary and Recommendations
February – March	Create cougar sighting media fact sheet
February – May	Create community toolkit
February – May	Provide tools for living with cougars
February - June	Cross-Program Working Dog Procedure Development
February - August	Dangerous Wildlife Policy Review and Draft Revision
February - September	Science Team Review Panel



Questions?

