

Cougar Hunting Seasons and Regulations WAC 220-415-100

Anis Aoude
Game Division Manager, Wildlife Program

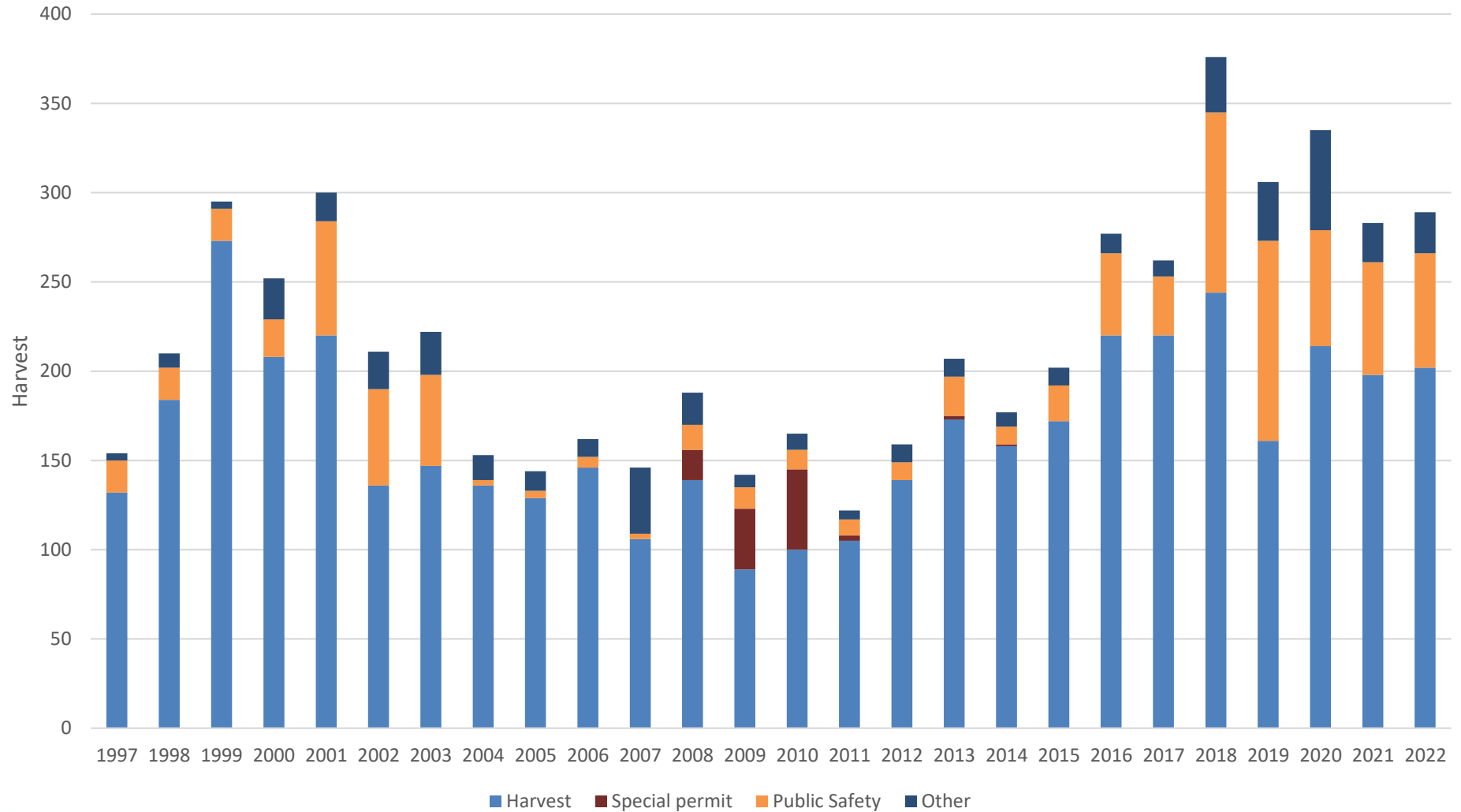


Current Season Structure

- Early season Sept 1 – Dec 31
- Late season Jan 1 – April 30
- Any legal weapon in both seasons
- Most hunt areas (PMU) have a harvest guidelines
- Starting Jan 1, the Director may close hunt areas that meet or exceed the harvest guideline
- Only recreational harvest count towards the guidelines



Annual Known Cougar Mortality



Petition Initiated Rule Making

- Petition to initiate rulemaking was filed on October 25, 2023
- Commission accepted the petition and directed department staff to initiate rule making on December 15, 2023
- Department staff analyzed latest cougar data to provide updated numbers that could be used in a framework for the Commission to consider
- Commission voted on rule language that is the basis for this proposal on April 19, 2024



Proposed Rule change

- The cougar hunting season will begin September 1 and end March 31.
- All independent-aged cougars count towards the cougar mortality cap.
- The cap will be based on a growth rate of 13% and a cougar density of 2.3 cougars per 100 km².
- All known human-related cougar mortality (including conflict) shall count toward the cap.
- In PMUs that reach the 13% cap prior to the recreational hunting season starting, the cap will be increased to 20% of the population to provide hunting opportunity in those PMUs.
- The season shall close when mortalities in those PMUs meet or exceed 20% of the population. Additionally, if opened the season shall close within 72 hours of that number being reached. This section will sunset after the 2024-2025 season.



Public Comment

Themes in support

Cougars should be protected

Protect cougars from extinction

Cougars provide ecosystem balance

Cougar control over-abundance of deer and elk

Killing cougars does not save deer and elk

Killing cougars will increase conflict

Deer and elk are plentiful

Cougars should be managed for all people

This proposal is science based



Public Comment

Themes in Opposition

Do not allow the increase to 20%

Stop all cougar hunting

No need to reduce opportunity cougar numbers are high

Remove the sunset clause on the 20%

Use hunters for cougar conflict resolution

Bring back hound hunting

Feels rushed

Goes further than roll back

Goes against agency recommendation

Propose a year-round season

Should not use a statewide density estimate

13% cap too restrictive and needlessly reduces opportunity

Counting all mortality towards the cap needlessly reduces opportunity

Politically driven anti-hunting agenda

Not science based

Public safety concerns

Ungulate abundance concerns





Questions?