



## Fish and Wildlife Commission Presentation Summary Sheet

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**Meeting date:**

4/4/2025

**Agenda item:**

2025 Bear and Cougar Rulemaking - Decision

**Presenter(s):**

Stephanie Landry, Carnivore Section Manager, Wildlife Program  
Anis Aoude, Game Division Manager, Wildlife Program

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**Background summary:**

Department staff briefed the Commission on March 21, 2025 on the proposed amendments to WAC 220-415-090 – Fall black bear hunting seasons and regulations, WAC 220-415-100 – Cougar hunting seasons and regulations, and WAC 220-400-050 – Requirements for sealing of pelts and collection of biological information for river otter, cougar, lynx, and bobcat.

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**Staff recommendation:**

For WAC 220-415-090, Department staff recommend a fall general black bear harvest season that runs from August 1 – November 15 with a 2-bear bag limit *UNLESS* the BBMU is not managed for a growing or stable population (i.e., Urban BBMU) or the BBMU has a mortality rate over the last 3 years that exceeds the intrinsic growth rate (i.e., >8% mortality). Only the Willapa Hills BBMU was over the intrinsic growth rate and managed for a growing or stable population. Therefore, the Willapa Hills BBMU is recommended to have a season from August 15 – November 15 with a 1 bear bag limit. Additionally, the Okanogan BBMU was recommended by the district biologists for that area to be treated similarly due to a lower density observed by on-the-ground investigations in that BBMU. Therefore, the Okanogan BBMU is also recommended to have a season from August 15 – November 15 with a 1 bear bag limit. Staff recommend no harvest in GMUs 157, 410-417, 419-424, 490, 522, and 655. All other BBMUs are recommended to follow the general season guidelines mentioned above. Department staff also recommend making the harvest of cubs or females with cubs illegal and requiring that bear tooth samples be submitted by December 01 of the current hunt season. Lastly, Department staff recommend increasing the GMUs that require the bear ID test for hunting black bear in those GMUs to include all potential areas where a grizzly bear may disperse to or has dispersed to in the past.

For WAC 220-415-100, Department staff recommend the selected harvest framework that was voted on in December 2024 by the Commission for a cougar general harvest season that runs from Sept 1 – March 31 using a harvest cap that, when met, closes the designated area (Cougar Hunt Management Unit) to further hunting-related harvest mortality. These closures are recommended to be updated weekly on Thursdays throughout the harvest season.

For WAC 220-400-050, Department staff recommend changing the sealing requirements for cougars from having to call in/report their harvest within 3 days and seal the cougar within 5 days of harvest to requiring that cougars must be sealed within 3 days of harvest without having a call-in reporting requirement. This allows staff to input the most critical details of the harvest and to account for the harvest at a faster rate for improved harvest management. Additionally, most hunters were already sealing their harvests within the 3-day window required for reporting and avoiding the call-in reporting option. Staff also recommend requiring proof of sex be left attached to the cougar at the time of sealing.

Additionally in WAC 220-400-050, Department staff recommend clarifying that bobcat pelts may be sealed prior to jaw submission if the hunter or trapper is sending the bobcat to a WDFW licensed taxidermist or fur dealer and must attest that they will submit the lower jaw to WDFW before the sealing deadline of April 20. Lastly, staff recommend clarifying what information is needed to have a bobcat or river otter pelt sealed by the Department or a licensed WDFW sealer, which includes the hunter/trapper's name, WILD ID, location and date of harvest, sex of harvested animal, and the harvest method.

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**Policy issue(s) and expected outcome:**

- Maximizing recreational hunting opportunity while maintaining viable wildlife populations.

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**Fiscal impacts of agency implementation:**

None

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**Public involvement process used and what you learned:**

The Department notified individuals and organizations via news release and email, informing them of the opportunity to provide comment on the proposed regulations. Additionally, these individuals and organizations were informed of the opportunity to provide verbal testimony at the March 21, 2025 Commission meeting in Kennewick.

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**Action requested and/or proposed next steps:**

Adopt WACs 220-415-090, 220-415-100, and 220-400-050, as presented.

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**Draft motion language:**

I move to adopt WACs 220-415-090, 220-415-100, and 220-400-050 as presented by department staff.

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**Post decision communications plan:**

WDFW Website

News Release