

From: Mountain Lion Foundation info@mountainlion.org
Subject: ACT NOW- Tell SD officials to protect mountain lions
Date: September 22, 2024 at 11:22 AM
To: n hilding nhilshat@rapidnet.com

MF

Good afternoon ms hilding,

South Dakota's Game, Fish and Parks Commission is proposing to cut the state's mountain lion population by increasing hunting in the Black Hills. The Commission is taking comment **now** on this dangerous proposal.

[Speak out today to stop this dangerous proposal.](#)

The scientific staff of South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks proposed holding population targets steady in the plan they proposed based on feedback from stakeholders in South Dakota. The Commission chose to reject that proposal and lower population targets for the small mountain lion population in South Dakota's Black Hills. State officials manage that population as if it were the only breeding population in the state, despite tribal hunting seasons in other areas, and there are no population estimates for the rest of the state, nor restrictions on the number of mountain lions killed elsewhere. By lowering the population target from 300 to 150-250, the Commission is setting the stage to increase hunting limits and eventually allow greater hound hunting.

There are two ways to comment. The first opportunity is to [comment through the state's official form before September 25](#) (the staff's preferred deadline, though submissions will be accepted until the 29th). urging the Commission and staff not to reduce the state's sensitive mountain lion populations. On the state's official form, please:

1. enter your address in South Dakota
2. select "Mountain Lion Action Plan" as your topic
3. Select "Oppose" or "Other"

In your comments, use your own words to explain that you oppose the proposal to reduce mountain lion population targets. It's important that you use your own words to explain the issues. Form letters will likely be discarded or use to discredit comments from advocates for mountain lion protections.

There will also be opportunities to testify in person or via Zoom at the forthcoming commission meeting in Huron, SD, October 3-4. If you can plan to attend that meeting and testify against this proposed reduction in mountain lion populations, we will follow up with talking points and further information as that meeting gets closer.

Here are some key points to make:

1. You are a resident of South Dakota. The more clear you make your connection to the state and its wild lands and animals, the more weight your comment may carry.
2. You oppose reducing mountain lion populations in the Black Hills, and prefer that the state regulate hunting outside the Black Hills Explain why mountain lions are important to you and why you want to see mountain lion populations increase.
3. The Commission has proposed to reduce mountain lion populations from around 250 to nearer 150. Overhunting had driven mountain lions out of the state entirely until the late 1990s, and the population remains sensitive to overhunting. Allowing the population to recover statewide and return to states further east would benefit people and wildlife, and South Dakota should manage with a goal of restoring historic mountain lion populations, not push them to the lowest possible limit.
4. Research throughout the West has found that increased hunting does nothing to reduce conflict with livestock, and there is a substantial body of research that shows increased hunting actually *increases* conflict with livestock. The solution to conflicts with livestock is good husbandry, not increased killing. Good husbandry — good fencing, livestock guardian dogs, etc. — trains mature mountain lions to stay away from livestock, while killing mountain lions simply opens territories for younger, less judicious cats who are most prone to conflict.
5. Mountain lions have lived in balance with deer for millennia, and hunting is not necessary to manage that relationship. The changing climate of South Dakota is a far bigger driver of deer populations, and indeed research in Nebraska has shown that deer populations actually grow faster in the small areas where mountain lions are currently present.
6. Because hound hunting kills more mountain lions than traditional boot hunting, reducing these population goals is a necessary first step to allowing greater hound hunting in South Dakota. This would not benefit South Dakota's hunters, and could devastate this small and sensitive population.
7. Allowing mountain lions to recover fully statewide, and establish populations in neighboring states where excessive hunting extirpated populations through the 20th century, would allow a far wider range of management options. Overhunting this small population in the Black Hills simply repeats the errors that drove the species to extinction in South Dakota once before! Policymakers should let the population recover statewide before increasing hunting.

Don't feel obliged to make all of those points in your letter. So long as different writers hit all of these points, the commission will hear and understand the concerns.

We will provide updated talking points before the Commission meeting for those interested in testifying. Local advocates are organizing a workshop to discuss the opportunities to testify on this important issue, to be held over Zoom at 6:30 MT on September 25th. I will send an event invitation with more details shortly.

For the Lions,

Josh Rosenau
Director of Policy & Advocacy



Mountain Lion Foundation
PO Box 1896
Sacramento, CA 95812
United States

If you believe you received this message in error or wish to no longer receive email from us, please [unsubscribe](#).