

**From:** Josh Rosenau, Mountain Lion Foundation info@mountainlion.org  
**Subject:** URGENT: South Dakota's leaders want to slash our tiny mountain lion population  
**Date:** October 2, 2024 at 1:18 PM  
**To:** n hilding nhilshat@rapidnet.com



Dear ms hilding,

South Dakota's Game, Fish and Parks Commission will be voting **tomorrow** on a plan to cut the state's mountain lion population. **Your testimony tomorrow in person or by Zoom** could turn them away from this dangerous proposal and protect the small population of mountain lions in South Dakota.

## Make a plan to testify now!

The Commission meets this week in Huron, SD, taking public comment **tomorrow (Thursday) at 2 pm**. To testify in person, simply show up by 2 and sign in. If you prefer to testify via Zoom, [write to Liz Kierl at Game Fish and Parks](#) today or until 1 PM tomorrow and ask to speak on the two items related to mountain lion hunting.

**Who:** South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks Commission

**What:** Meeting to vote on lowering mountain lion population

**When:** October 3, 2024, from 1-5 pm CST (testimony starts at 2)

**Where:** Huron Event Center, 100 4th St SW, Huron, SD 5735

**Why:** Mountain lions are essential to South Dakota's ecosystem and there's no reason in the Commission or the Department's process to argue for lowering the already-small population.

There are two items that you can comment on. For both, please keep your comments shorter than three minutes, be polite and respectful, and emphasize that you live in South Dakota, If you are a hunter or livestock owner, mentioning that may carry weight with commissioners.

The first item that will come up for comment is finalization of fees for hunting licenses. Hunters can currently buy a mountain lion license for just \$22, and the proposal would raise that to a mere \$24. In speaking on this proposal:

1. Emphasize that mountain lions do not need to be hunted for any ecological or management reason.
2. Highlight that mountain lions are barely bouncing back after unrestricted hunting wiped them out entirely in South Dakota.
3. Remind the Commission that mountain lions provide essential ecosystem services. They reduce risks of chronic wasting disease, keeping deer and elk herds healthier. They reduce deer-vehicle collision rates, saving South Dakotans' lives and millions of dollars in expenses. They have more ecological connections than any other carnivore studied, improving the health and stability of ecosystems.

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4. All those benefits deserve protection. \$24 is too low a fee to charge for the license to kill one of these rare, beautiful, and essential animals.

After finalization of rules including license fees, the Commission will take up other matters. In this time slot, you can address the Mountain Lion Action Plan. At their last meeting, Commissioners proposed an amendment to the plan which would lower the population target from 200-300 to 150-250 (with one commissioner requesting that policy push it toward the lower end of that range). In speaking on this item:

1. Emphasize that there was a stakeholder group which met with department staff. That group was biased toward hunters and livestock owners, with limited voices for conservationists, wildlife advocates, and outside scientists. Even with that bias, **the stakeholder group did not recommend this reduction. Nor did the staff's draft action plan.**
2. Remind the commissioners of your previous comments about the ecological and social benefits of mountain lions. **South Dakota needs *more* mountain lions, not less!**
3. **Lowering the population target is not based on any science** or stated management goals. The commission discussed this in the context of complaints from livestock owners, but there's no indication that depredations have increased. Furthermore, extensive research has consistently shown that killing more mountain lions does not reduce conflict, and indeed a growing body of research suggests that increased hunting actually causes *more* conflict.
4. Because there is no clear purpose to this population reduction, there is a danger of further changes which once again **extirpate South Dakota's breeding population** in the Black Hills. That population has only returned to the state in the last few decades, and is still recovering.
5. **Allowing this population to grow and repopulate all of South Dakota** is a better goal than reducing it. Whether the hope is to increase opportunity for hunters or to extend the benefits of mountain lions widely, allowing these animals to breed and expand their range in South Dakota is crucial. Tribal Nations within South Dakota's borders currently have hunting seasons for resident populations elsewhere in the state, and rather than reducing the Black Hills population, the Department should study and manage that more widespread population to establish healthy state-wide mountain lion populations.

Of course, covering all of those talking points may take more than three minutes. Choose the ones that resonate most strongly for yourself, and add any details about your own personal feelings toward mountain lions or positive experiences with them in South Dakota. **The most crucial thing** is for Commissioners to hear that South Dakotans care about healthy and growing mountain lion populations. Even if you speak for just 30 seconds, that message is something which should sway the commission.

Feel free to [write to me](#) or call me at 916-832-7826 with any questions. Please also **encourage any friends or neighbors who might share your love of mountain lions to attend or Zoom into the**

**meeting**, and share the talking points above with them. **We can stop this dangerous plan**, but only if South Dakotans speak up tomorrow.

Thank you for your support and hard work on this.

For the Lions,

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