



MONTANA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION FWP PROPOSAL AND INFORMATION SHEET

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Meeting Date: June 12, 2026

Agenda Item: Mountain lion quotas for fall 2026–winter 2027.

Action Needed: Final

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 30 minutes

Background: The fall 2026–winter 2027 mountain lion harvest quotas and license numbers are recommended based on commission direction provided to the department in June 2023, which included variable reductions in specific lion management units (LMUs) and lion ecoregions targeted to occur over a six-year period. These quota recommendations also incorporate season structure changes adopted at the December 2025 commission meeting. In December 2025, the commission voted to eliminate limited and unlimited lion licenses and retained a general license structure with seasons that close when male and female quotas are met. Limited license numbers were incorporated as part of the male quota in the fall 2026–winter 2027 proposed quotas.

The only substantive change in quotas that the department recommends includes reductions commensurate with harvest within the Southwest Ecoregion. The Southwest Ecoregion is the only ecoregion in which declines have been consistently demonstrated in population model iterations and when comparing initial population estimates with estimates recently developed with the spatially explicit capture-recapture marking study. Reducing quotas to the observed harvest levels will allow hunting to continue reducing mountain lion populations, while limiting rates of reduction.

Public Involvement Process and Results: The department holds annual meetings with selected stakeholders to discuss population observation, harvests, and trends. During some regional meetings, houndsmen reported reduced encounters with mountain lions during routine hunting activities in many areas. Although the department has not detected any substantive biological concerns with mountain lion populations, some regional staff have noted shifts in abundance.

Public comment will be solicited for a four-week period following posting of commission materials. Public comments will be posted online and provided to commissioners at least two weeks prior to the June commission meeting.

Analysis and Alternatives: Mountain lion harvest is analyzed based on population and harvest monitoring data collected by the department.

Alternative A: The commission may choose to adopt the department's recommendation.

Alternative B: The commission may choose to amend the recommended proposal and adopt as deemed appropriate.

Agency Recommendation and Rationale: The department recommends the commission adopt the mountain lion quotas as presented. With the elimination of limited and unlimited licenses, the department recommends that the number of special licenses authorized previously be incorporated into the male harvest quota for the mountain lion season. For example, in lion management unit 100, the previous number of limited lion licenses was 6 and the male quota was 10; the department is recommending that the male quota should be 16 for fall 2026–winter 2027. The mockup accompanying this proposal and information sheet reflects those changes throughout the document.

The department is recommending specific changes to quotas within the Southwest Ecoregion to reflect the reduction in mountain lion populations we have detected there. The recommendation should not reduce the number of mountain lions harvested recently and should continue the trend, but the reductions should limit the likelihood for unplanned reductions at rates greater than anticipated. Specific changes in male and female quotas are recommended by the department and include:

- For LMU 301: decrease the FEMALE quota from 7 to 4 AND the MALE quota from 13 to 6.
- For LMU 302: decrease the FEMALE quota from 6 to 2 AND the MALE quota from 4 to 2.
- For LMU 314: decrease the FEMALE quota from 4 to 2 and the MALE quota from 7 to 4
- For LMU 317: decrease the FEMALE quota from 4 to 1 (male quota unchanged)
- For LMU 319: decrease the FEMALE quota from 2 to 1 AND the MALE quota from 3 to 2.
- For LMU 321 decrease the FEMALE quota from 1 to 0 (male quota unchanged).
- For LMU 322: increase the MALE quota from 4 to 5 (female quota unchanged).

Within Region 7, the department also recommends a separate male and female quota. Although the total quota has been 45, this year the department recommends establishing a male quota of 35 and a female quota of 10.

These changes are reflected in the attached mockup of the fall 2026–winter 2027 mountain lion regulations.

Proposed Motion: I move the Fish and Wildlife Commission approve the fall 2026–winter 2027 mountain lion quotas as presented by the department and the accompanying mockup, with all other aspects regarding prior seasons adopted, except for those influenced by routine calendar rotations.