

**Nevada Board of Wildlife Commissioners**  
**Heritage fund proposal for reduction of Mountain Lion predation in central Nevada**  
**By Mike Stremler August 28, 2010**

**#22**

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Nevada Board of Wildlife Commissioners  
1100 Valley Road,  
Reno, NV 89512.

**re: Heritage Fund proposal by Mike Stremler**

PROJECT TITLE: Reduction of Mountain Lion depredation in the following Mountain Ranges: East Range, Tobin Range, Stillwater Range, Fish Creek Mountains, and Clan Alpine Mountains

This proposed project would be an effort to reduce the number of lions in the above mentioned mountain ranges in accordance with the policies of the Nevada Board of Wildlife Commissioners in their Mountain Lion Plan in 1995 and repeated in their Wildlife Action Plan. (Source is the Mountain Lion Foundation web site):

- 1. Maintain mountain lion distribution in reasonable densities throughout the state*
- 2. Control mountain lions creating a public safety hazard or causing property damage*
- 3. Provide recreational, educational, and scientific use opportunities of mountain lion resource*
- 4. Maintain a balance between mountain lions and their prey, and*
- 5. Manage mountain lions as a meta-population*

Both empirical and anecdotal information exists that indicates the habitat for mule deer and bighorn sheep within these areas is supporting substantially lower populations than the potential while the numbers and distribution of mountain lions is higher than in the recent past. As discussed in numerous studies, limits to large animal populations include habitat deficiencies, weather, and predation. Habitat attributes do not seem to be the limiting factor in this portion of central Nevada which indicates that predation may very well be limiting mule deer,

bighorn sheep, and pronghorn antelope numbers. This project is intended to help reach Goal Number "4" and maintain a balance between mountain lions and their prey.

Since 1970 a series of studies have documented that predation prevents mule deer and bighorn sheep from reaching a population in balance with their habitat. Some of the studies we reviewed were straight forward biological discussion of predator and prey relations and others had a decidedly political implication but still indicated the need to balance predator and prey populations. For examples see:

- 1 "Predators and Prey—A Case of Imbalance Mountain Lions and the North Kings Deer Herd", from the June 1989 issue of Forest Research West. Mountain lions proved to be limiting mule deer reproduction.
- 2 *"Counting Sheep: Bighorn Sheep and Mountain Lions in the American West"*,
- 3 Elizabeth Clark, Department of Biology, Washington University in St. Louis
- 4 National Center for Case Study Teaching in Science April 17, 2009. Sierra Big Horn Sheep populations were nearly eliminated by mountain lion predation and the US Fish and Wildlife Service now pays full time hunters to control mountain lions in the Sierra Nevada habitats.
- 5 *"Culling Mountain Lions to Protect Ungulate Populations -- Some Lives Are More Sacred Than Others"* Eric M. Rominger New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, Predator-Prey Workshop in Transactions of the 72nd North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference. Predator population controls do not result in the extirpation of predators from areas such as these central Nevada mountain ranges, rather the result is a predator population that becomes balanced in numbers with the habitat and prey base available. This article includes a practical discussion of the fact that special interest groups decided not to sue the state Fish and Game agency when it was demonstrated that mountain lion controls are not intended to eliminate all of the mountain lions and were based on sound biological principles.

NDOW has on-going contracts with other government agencies for predator control throughout the State. Aerial hunting and other controls are available for predators such as coyotes, but mountain lion populations can only be managed by hunting directly on the ground. These particular mountain ranges are home to the Desert Bighorns as well as mule deer and antelope. Currently the mountain lion numbers exceed what is appropriate for the prey base. The mountain lion population needs to be reduced. This proposal is intended as a supplement to the existing contractual predator control and not replacement of it.

In cooperation with NDOW I will record GPS locations the location where each lion is killed and other appropriate observations such as gender, apparent body condition, stomach contents that indicate what has most recently been eaten, GPS location of initial contact by my dogs if possible, and we will search for up to three hours for a recent lion kill location to confirm the stomach content material. In return we prefer to be issued a permit for educational research. If for some

reason special permits are not issued for up to ten lions then my family will all hunt together and we could tag 12 cats legally.

Costs for the project are based on costs incurred in my work as a licensed sub-guide in the State of Nevada. The project allows for the take of ten lions at a cost of \$1,800 per lion. Follow up for the study will be conducted in these areas as I guide clients for hunts and run my ranch in the area, I will prepare a report to document the effects of this project for three years after the project to determine the effect of the predator controls on ranching operations and big game.

In conclusion, I believe this project will provide a good return on investment as I can observe the effects of this project on a nearly full-time basis and report my findings to the Nevada Department of Wildlife. My current hypothesis is that it does little good to create habitat for sheep and mule deer when the lion population is at an all time high. The habitat in these mountains can support larger numbers of ungulates, but for the excessive amount of mountain lions in the area.

I have been assisted in preparation of this proposal by Mr. Floyd Rathbun who is a Certified Range Management Consultant and consulting wildlife biologist and his qualifications will be provided to the Wildlife Commission upon request.

Thank you for your consideration and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Mike Stremmer