

Cougar-Hunting Rules to Be Reviewed

Washington commission will consider regulations regarding hunting the big cats with dogs.

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A proposal in Washington seeks changes to the state's cougar-hunting regulations.

At an Aug. 8-9 meeting, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife is set to consider adopting amendments to the rules for hunting cougars, in line with a bill approved earlier this year by the Legislature. That bill, ESHB 2438, extends a 2004 pilot program allowing cougar hunting with the help of hounds for three more years in five eastern Washington counties.

In addition, other counties would be authorized to request legalized hounding. The public had an opportunity to comment on the proposed changes during a commission meeting July 18.

Hunting cougars with dogs was banned statewide by public initiative in 1996, according to the department. However, in response to concerns about public safety and livestock loss, the Washington Legislature voted in 2004 to OK hunting cougars with hounds during specific seasons in Chelan, Okanogan, Ferry, Stevens and Pend Oreille counties where cougar densities pose potential public-safety risks.

Opponents of the plan said hunting cougars with hounds leads to innocent cats being killed and results in only trophy-quality animals being targeted.