

Senate Bill 59
January 8, 2009
Presented by Ken McDonald
Senate Fish and Game Committee

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, for the record, I am Ken McDonald, Wildlife Division Administrator for Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP). I am here today to provide brief informational testimony on Senate Bill 59.

In order to monitor harvest of mountain lions, current law requires each person who takes a lion to present the lion to a FWP office to be "trophied." The process includes recording certain information about the hunter, location of kill, sex of the lion, occasionally taking biological specimens and placing a locking tag on the skull. This process takes about half an hour.

The legislature established a trophy fee of \$50 for both resident and nonresident hunters who take lions, in part, to help cover the cost of lion management. On average, about 300 lions are taken each year, resulting in a total income of about \$15,000 from trophy fees.

Like most other license and fee revenue, money collected from trophy fees is deposited into the FWP general license account. This is FWP's main "checking account" and provides funding for most of our fish and wildlife programs, including mountain lions.

Currently, FWP spends between \$80,000 and \$100,000 per year on basic mountain lion management activities, such as monitoring populations and harvest, setting seasons and quotas and enforcing regulations. FWP has also spent approximately \$2.3 Million over the past 10 years on a long-term mountain lion research project that is nearing completion and will spend about \$75,000 updating our lion management plan, and incorporating the information obtained through the research effort.

SB 59 would statutorily direct that the money collected from lion trophy fees be spent solely for the benefit of mountain lions. Because FWP spends significantly more than the \$15,000 per year raised from trophy fees on mountain lion programs, SB59 will not result in any net increase in resources directed to lion management, unless funding is redirected from other programs funded from the general license account.

If the sponsor's goal is to increase funding for FWP's lion program, without adversely affecting other programs, an alternative to SB 59 would be to give the FWP Commission authority to auction or raffle one lion license, as is currently done for moose, sheep, goat, deer and elk. FWP has not estimated how much additional revenue might be generated through an auction or raffle, but as more lion hunting districts come under limited permits, an auction license might have considerable value.

If the committee has any questions, I would be pleased to answer them. Thank you.