

House Bill 29
January 22, 2013
Presented by Ken McDonald
House Fish, Wildlife and Parks Committee

Mr. Chairman and committee members, I am Ken McDonald, Wildlife Division Administrator of the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP). I am here in opposition to House Bill 29.

FWP's interpretation of HB 29 is that it would *entitle* mountain lion license holders to trap mountain lions during any and all open mountain lion seasons in Montana. Furthermore, "trap" is defined in MCA 87-6-101(32) to include "snares". In that light, HB 29 would convert all existing hunting seasons to hunting and trapping seasons, including snares and traps as legal devices.

For this reason, FWP opposes HB 29 because it removes Commission decision space and it would mandate trapping seasons statewide that would result in reduced ability to manage mountain lions, user conflicts, public opposition, and waste. We are also concerned that it will provide additional fodder for anti-trapping advocates to use to try to stop all trapping.

Some specific concerns with this bill: Mountain lions are a highly prized trophy animal in Montana. Trapping is not needed as an additional tool to achieve harvests as the demand for mountain lion hunting and harvest greatly exceeds the supply, and current structure is adequate to achieve necessary harvest to meet management objectives.

Trapping is not selective. Authorization of a trapping season would undoubtedly lead to increased waste given that trappers will catch spotted young, females with spotted young, multiple lions, and females in excess of female subquotas. Trappers could release captured lions that are not legal to take, but it is more challenging. Trapped lions may be unreleaseable, and lions captured in snares would be dead.

Hunting lions with hounds and treeing them is the primary method by which lions are taken. Hound hunters can determine gender of a treed lion and also may avoid chasing females with young. This selective ability is necessary to avoid taking spotted young (not legal), adult lions with spotted young (not legal), and female lions if female subquotas are full. This is absolutely necessary to manage mountain lion harvest.

There may be circumstances where authorization of a trapping season would be desirable, but it needs to come with the discretion and flexibility of a Commission decision, not simply be automatic. A simple amendment to Section 1 (87-2-508) would address this concern: inserting as authorized by the commission after trap on line 14 of page 1. If amended in this fashion, the bill would provide the option of authorizing trapping along with specific trapping regulations.

FWP respectfully requests a Do Not Pass on House Bill 29 as written.