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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Cougar Fund, a national nonprofit dedicated to the conservation of the cougar throughout its present and historic range, works on behalf of its members to ensure that cougar management, as well as management of their prey, are always held to the highest standards of peer-reviewed science. In addition to educating the public about the many issues that surround cougars, we look to balance human interests with healthy cougar populations. The Cougar Fund would like to state that **we strongly oppose the proposed changes in South Dakota Game, Fish and Park's rules regarding mountain lions, especially the proposal to let landowners outside of the Black Hills Fire Protection District kill mountain lions on their property year-round.**

The proposed changes read as follows:

Amend Mountain Lion Hunting Season rules to establish season dates, open area, harvest limits, requirements

and restrictions, and number of resident licenses available; change the season dates from November 1 to December 31, inclusive, to January 1 through March 31, inclusive; allow the GFP Commission by resolution to extend the mountain lion season beyond March 31, and create a mountain lion license which allows landowners to hunt year round on their own land situated outside the Black Hills Fire Protection District

The following points reflect our position:

- Cougars are a self-regulating species and the killing of cougars in efforts to increase or maintain livestock and human safety has not been scientifically justified.
- The extreme measure of the unlimited and loosely monitored killing of cougars is not the best means to accomplishing the goal of decreasing depredation incidents.
- The expansive killing of cougars not only increases the proportion of transient juvenile males in the population – an age and gender that has been shown to be disproportionately involved in depredation incidents – but may actually lead to increased litter sizes since as population numbers decrease, reproductive rates are known to increase.
- The Cougar Fund feels that South Dakota is ignoring the latest peer-reviewed science in this proposal.
- A 2008 study by Robinson et al on the implications of sink populations in cougar management that found carnivore management plans that do not take into account specific responses to harvest, may be ineffective for local population control. They state

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“cougar removal in small game management areas will increase immigration and recruitment of younger animals from adjacent areas, resulting in little or no reduction in cougar densities and shift population structure toward younger animals.”

- We suggest alternative management techniques such as appropriate land-use planning, improved animal husbandry and public education about living in cougar country that will have a far greater affect in the long term.
- Additionally lawmakers should provide tax incentives to pay for fences and frightening devices, such as motion detectors and sirens. Laws should also punish irresponsible landowners who attract cougar problems through actions such as leaving an animal carcass in a pasture.
- Finally, the Cougar Fund also urges the state to set a quota that includes ALL cougar mortality, as is the case in many other western states. giving game mangers the ability to set cougar harvest strategies in a framework of adaptive management objectives.

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SAFETY IN COUGAR COUNTRY

Preventative Actions

- Be aware of your surroundings and recreate responsibly. Consider hiking, biking and running with others.
- Supervise children and do not leave them unattended, especially at dawn or dusk.
- Keep all garbage, pet food or food scraps indoors to avoid attracting prey.
- Keep pets and livestock in a secure area, especially at night.
- Install outdoor lighting where you walk after dark or install motion activated lighting.
- Do not feed wildlife. Predators follow Prey!
- Minimize vegetation in your yard where a cougar could hide and avoid planting foliage that attracts prey.
- Never approach a cougar!

ENCOUNTERING A COUGAR

- Stay clam and back away slowly. Do not turn your back, run or bend over.
- Avoid looking like prey. Try to make yourself appear as big as possible, make eye contact, open your jacket, raise your arms.
- If a lion is aggressive, throw rocks and sticks, yell as loud as you can. Always fight back and do not play dead.