

THE DAILY  
SENTINEL  
GRAND JUNCTION, COLORADO



Sunday, October 13, 2024

## Current and former CPW commissioners endorse Prop 127

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By JAMES PRIBYL, JACK MURPHY and JESSICA BEAULIEU

We are current and former Colorado Parks and Wildlife commissioners, which is the body that sets wildlife policy, including a former chair, and we encourage a “YES” vote on Proposition 127.

Prop 127 simply protects Colorado’s majestic mountain lions and bobcats from highly unpopular, unscientific and unwarranted abuse and exploitation that in no way contributes to our bright future of ethical outdoor recreation in our great state of Colorado.

Wild cats are hunted by dogs, not humans. The pack is set loose in nature, tracked by phone app, often aided by drones. It’s a long, raucous and terrorizing attack on unoffending native animals, who seek safety up a tree. It resembles the canned hunt as wildlife has nowhere to run, no chance to survive.

A small lion-hunting industry promotes capturing the prize, the trophy Tom, guaranteeing success at 100%.

This permissive environment for killing wild cats — animals not involved in any human conflict — sharply contrasts with Colorado’s devotion to ethical hunting principles including fair chase.

Bobcats are baited with the smell of sardines or oily cat food in cages across the remote wilderness, exposed to brutal sub-zero winter weather. Held daytime and nightfall, animals suffer from stress. The trapper arrives to choke the caged animal slowly to death not to bloody their pelt prized for spots similar to the leopard.

Trappers sell fur at auction, the first stop along luxury fur market sales to China. This is not hunting but commodification of wildlife driven by market prices

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Prop 127 allows voters to recognize not all hunting is defensible, and these are indefensible state-sanctioned acts of cruelty.

It's time for change because we're doing much more harm than good.

Nearly half of lions killed every year for recreation are females. Trophy hunters are asked to look for kittens, but that cannot work, because mothers leave their most vulnerable young behind in the den when going out to find food.

Abundant moral and welfare concerns deserve serious attention. Dismiss them, and we endanger our humanity in favor of rapid technology that grants unfair advantage, disrespecting both native wildlife and our ethical hunting traditions.

Prop 127 reminds us of 30 years ago, when Colorado Division of Wildlife bear biologist Tom Beck, an avid hunter, spoke out in support of Amendment 10, approved by voters to protect bears from baiting with doughnuts slathered with bacon grease, from chasing them with dogs to then be shot, which also orphaned cubs.

Beck was attacked mercilessly by extreme special interests for doing the right thing for wildlife and for Colorado. He had no support from commissioners. His boss, Bruce Gill, was similarly attacked for good research showing what's known as fact today: you cannot kill lions to solve declining deer. It does not work. CPW concluded this once again in a presentation of a six-year study just last year. We're proud to carry Beck's legacy, understanding that we can support most hunting, but not all hunting, and it's important to see the difference when the loudest extreme voices want nothing to change.

We must, and we can vote YES. As we choose to kill apex predators for recreation, it blinds us from investing in lions as the unique biodiversity boon they are in helping prey animals maintain or increase their population numbers.

Lions not only selectively target mule deer infected with Chronic Wasting Disease, but are equipped with a gut to remove CWD from the environment.

CWD is the most serious risk to the future of hunting today, infecting 42 out of 51 deer herds and 17 of 42 elk herds of Colorado.

To be clear, CPW offers cougar hunting to serve mountain lion hunters alone, for a recreational opportunity. Fur trapping brings trappers personal profit.

There is no research, no evidence to suggest that the recreational hunting of wild cats brings any public benefit or solves any problem. It's not managing populations, wildlife, public safety or conflict. As a science-backed agency, we are held to a higher standard and one of science, not mere opinion and conjecture.

There is evidence allowing lion hunting is increasing human-lion conflict, as studies inform that complaints and livestock depredations "were most strongly associated" with lion hunting and drastically increased from 36% to 240%.

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Prop 127 is based on not a little, but more than a half-century of the best science as evidence for commissioners to confidently tell the voters that lion populations will stabilize, not increase, without hunting. In California without lion hunting, populations are stable, not increasing, and at the same level as they are here in Colorado.

Please join us in voting “YES” for Prop 127.

*Jack Murphy and Jessica Beaulieu are current Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) commissioners representing outdoor recreation and state parks utilization.*

*Their views are their own as citizens. CPW is neutral on Prop 127.*

*James Pribyl served as former member of the Colorado State Parks Board, Greater Outdoor Colorado Trust Fund, and as chair of the Parks and Wildlife Commission.*