
TIMES-CALL

Guest Opinion: Colorado Prop 127 lost, but it raised legitimate concerns about big cat hunting

By Julie Marshall

In reflecting on the new year ahead, I'm greatly inspired by the mass public awareness our campaign called Cats Aren't Trophies, or Prop 127, has raised.

Despite our loss, the fact 1.4 million Coloradans voted to stop the unscientific and unethical killing of hundreds of mountain lions offers positive momentum to build upon.

I'm seeing evidence of greater citizen engagement for government accountability over responsible treatment of ecologically vital native predators designed brilliantly by nature as overseers for the health of our great outdoors.

Dozens of citizens who supported Prop 127 showed up at November's Colorado Parks and Wildlife's meeting in Lamar to express disapproval in hounding as that flouts CPW's own fair chase policy, given that Colorado trophy hunting guides paid \$8,500 to send dog packs out first to contain a mountain lion in a tree for shooting like fish in a barrel. The shooter is not part of the hunt, and not even a hunter, as he just follows behind to catch up just to shoot the animal that has nowhere to go.

CPW has a long history of unethical trophy hunting practices.

CPW does not allow guaranteed killing in recreational hunting, yet Colorado lion hunts are routinely advertised as the hunter being on-call and for a “guaranteed” head.

It was great to hear Commissioner Dr. Karen Bailey, a Boulder ecologist, state on record that she heard our concerns and is interested in investigating this further.

It’s worth noting that holding a cat in a tree with dogs, waiting for the shooter to catch up, violates CPW’s own policy. Derek Wolfe admitted on his radio show that he took at least an hour or more to catch up to his trophy cat before shooting him out of a tree.

Citizens raised concerns that our agency continues to call lion hunting “management” when science informs commissioners that recreational hunting is not necessary or even management, because lions are territorial predators who will manage their own populations naturally, without hunting.

CPW longtime retired carnivore manager Jerry Apker confirmed that lion populations are “self-regulating,” which means their populations do not require hunting as a tool to regulate them.

Those who voted no on Prop 127 want reform, but by commissioners. We can feel good that commissioners are finally asking tough questions and showing a willingness to govern and put wildlife at the center, not simply advocate for the fun of fringe lion shooters paying top dollar for a guaranteed head. And they must because wildlife is no one’s private property.

But while our campaign works hard alongside government for fair democratic representation, our opponents attack our

entire agency in the vilest way possible.

Safari Club International and Sportsmen's Alliance Foundation of Ohio just filed a lawsuit used to defame Colorado's wildlife agency.

In their press release, these extreme special interest groups took great care to single out and defame the good names of only CPW commissioners who supported Proposition 127.

This is "lawfare," designed to intimidate and chill speech, and if they prevail, no commissioner will ever be willing to comment on matters of importance to the public again.

Safari Club spent more than \$350,000 to defeat the citizen measure. It raffled off a Colorado lion trophy hunt as a play toy to support opposition to Prop 127, and just wrote a letter to endorse use of air guns to kill mountain lions in Wisconsin. Air guns are new technology that brings high chance to wound, cause pain and suffering, but not to kill mountain lions.

Ironically, these groups compelled the citizens of Colorado to explicitly trust our wildlife agency to make policy, then filed a lawsuit against the agency's entire policymaking body. How does that make any sense?

It doesn't.

I just received a push-poll call where the paid rep asked if my vote would have changed on 127 if I realized mountain lions were attacking children left and right. I told the rep that actually, the only one monster attacking anyone is Safari Club.

Colorado is so much better than this. Let's heed the positive call on Prop 127 and ask CPW to invest more heavily in real

call on F10P 127, and ask CFV to invest more heavily in real science, for managing mountain lions for their benefit, alive, for the health and balance of whole ecosystems. Mountain lions deserve our respect, not reviling.

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