

Daily Camera

Opinion: Julie Marshall: Mountain lions deserve our respect, not reviling

By [Daily Camera guest opinion](#) |

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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 that 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 already 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 meeting in Lamar to express disapproval of hounding, as that flouts

express disapproval of hunting, as that is not 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 follows behind to catch up just to shoot the animal that has nowhere to go.

CPW does not legally 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, noting that holding a cat in a tree with dogs, waiting for the shooter to catch up, would indeed violate CPW's own policy.

Anyone who says they run as fast as a pack of dogs chasing a cat is delusional. Colorado's most notorious trophy hunter, Derek Wolfe, admitted on his radio show that [he lagged 1 mile behind the dogs](#), getting lost until he finally caught up.

Citizens also raised concerns that our agency continues to call lion hunting "management" when the best peer-reviewed and published 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, as they do in California, where lions are listed as stable populations.

When called to testify to this precise statement by Commissioner Marie Haskett, retired CPW 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.

The CATs campaign heard from those who voted “No” on Prop 127 that they want reform, but by our policymaking body, the 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 enjoyment 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 are attacking our entire agency in the vilest way possible. Safari Club International and [Sportsmen’s Alliance Foundation of Ohio](#) just filed a lawsuit against Colorado’s wildlife agency.

Safari Club is the most notorious trophy-hunting organization on the planet. In their press release, these extreme special interest groups took great care to single out and malign the good names of two CPW commissioners who supported Proposition 127.

This action appears to lack any legal basis, making it “lawfare,” designed to intimidate and chill speech. If they prevail, no commissioner will ever be willing to comment on matters of importance to the public again.

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.

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 the use of air guns to kill mountain lions in Wisconsin. Air guns are new technology that brings a high chance to wound, cause pain and suffering, but not kill mountain lions.

Last week, I 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 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 science, for managing mountain lions for their benefit, alive, for the health and balance of whole ecosystems. Mountain lions deserve our respect, not reviling.

Julie Marshall is a former opinion editor for the Boulder Daily Camera. She works as Public Relations Director for Animal Wellness Action and the Center for a Humane Economy, two of 100-plus organizations that endorsed Prop 127, Cats Aren't Trophies.