



## **Agriculture Committee's Thumbs Down on Wildlife Science Bill Tells Us All We Need to Know**

*Dear Friend of Cats Aren't Trophies,*

During the Yes on 127 campaign, we heard a constant refrain from the opponents: “Trust the science. And “trust Colorado Parks and Wildlife Department” on wildlife policy in the state.

Well, Rep. Tammy Story, the author of HB 1258, called their bluff. She introduced a bill to modify Colorado statutes to demand that Colorado Parks and Wildlife pay attention to the science of wildlife ecology and allow its decisions to be driven by rigorous examination of conservation science.

We discovered in working with Rep. Story to draft this bill that there is a “hunting and trapping” mandate in the law. It tells us the CPW is supposed to allow “hunting and trapping” even if “the science” tells us that there’s no basis for these practices.

Dozens of Colorado citizens spoke up in support of science-based wildlife management at the hearing for HB 1258. The trophy hunting crowd showed up, too, and they were full-throated in opposing efforts to amend Colorado statutes to eliminate the hunting and trapping mandate and to codify science-based management in the law.

And what we learned again is that the system of wildlife management in the state is rigged in favor of the people who enjoy killing animals for their heads and their furs.

We know that the Colorado Wildlife Commission — which historically has defending spring bear hunting, bear baiting, hounding of lions, commercial trapping of bobcats, and for example — has never made it a priority to address these abusive practices.

And now we know that the House Agriculture Committee isn't serious-minded when it comes to real reforms.

It's precisely that dismissive attitude from lawmakers and commissioners that led us to undertake Prop 127 and to work to bar trophy hunting and commercial trapping of our native cats in Colorado. It was that same motivation that led an earlier generation of animal advocates and conservationists put two winning measures on the ballot in the 1990s — one to ban spring bear hunting and also baiting and hounding of bears and a second measure to halt the use of steel-jawed leghold traps and other body-gripping traps.

The response from the majority of Agriculture Committee members was dismissive, just as we expected. There was a knee-jerk defensiveness about allowing any and all forms of hunting,

including unsporting, inhumane, and reckless forms of it, such as hounding of lions and cage-trapping of bobcats.

On March 6, the House Agriculture Committee rejected the call to embed “science” and “conservation” into Colorado statutes by voting down HB 1258 with a vote of 10-3.

Remember, last year during the fight over Prop 127, we saw trophy hunters and fur trappers spend millions to distort the truth, backed by dark money they laundered from two super PACs from out of state. These same bullies made their way to the Capitol and did so again. Shamelessly.

HB 1258 was not too complex for Agriculture Committee members to make sense of. It put the “science” back in wildlife management. It ensured nonlethal actions would be fairly considered when managing wildlife.

Our team of CATs and friends, led by Reps. Tammy Story and Elizabeth Velasco, shined as beacons of light in a dark room filled with predator trophy hunters and fur trappers who think killing is their God-given right. Put in a position to oppose including language that guarantees science-based management, their true motivations were put on display: cruelty, unsporting conduct, and profit, when it comes to the exploitation of wildlife.

The enthusiasts for killing apex predators turned out in force. But so did Coloradans who actually care about wildlife and who understand that the lives of the animals matter in our world.

We even had to move to a library hall, because so many people on both sides showed up!

We jumped in the ring and fought for the principle that these animals matter. That the animals who inhabit wild places need protections from people who inflict pain and cruelty as a head-hunting or a fur-taking exercise.

If “hunting and trapping” were essential forms of “management” and some sort of ecological cure-all, Colorado would not have 157 native wildlife species and 117 plant species at risk of loss; we would not have Chronic Wasting Disease ravaging our wildlife with no cure.

We’ve created a record with HB 1258. Our opponents opposed a bill to establish science-based wildlife management. We knew all along that their hollow rhetoric was just a scheme to mask their real intentions: to have a free-for-all in chasing down, trapping, clubbing, and shooting apex predators in our state.

Now we’ve documented their verbal misdirections, the empty rhetoric of “science” and “conservation,” and exposed their self-aggrandizing purposes and cruel conduct.

Our fight is not over, not even close.

We’re going to demand that Colorado Wildlife Commissioners pay attention to the value of Coloradans. Join us in that effort.

And if they don’t heed the call to protect our native cats from ruthless, unsporting cruelty, we’ll find other means to advance reforms.

There is much, much more to come as we move onward, following the clarity that comes with intentional work and legislative accountability.

The future of wildlife policy in Colorado, and we need your engagement now more than ever.

**We are better together.**

**Please donate to protect Colorado's native cats!**

For the cats,  
Julie Marshall  
Communications Director