COLORADO
Parks and Wildlife
Department of Natural Resources

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Parks and Wildlife Commissioners

FROM: Brian Dreher, Assistant Director

DATE: December 23, 2025

SUBJECT: April 2026- March 2027 Mountain Lion Harvest Limit Recommendations

This memo summarizes Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) staff recommendations for mountain lion harvest limits for the April 2026- March 2027 season.

Regular Lion Season

Staff recommends a statewide harvest limit of 607 mountain lions for the April 2026-March 2027 season. This represents a net reduction of 3 lions in statewide harvest limits from the 2025-2026 season level. Staff proposes a reduction to harvest limits in one Data Analysis Unit (DAU, Map 1) and an increase in one DAU.

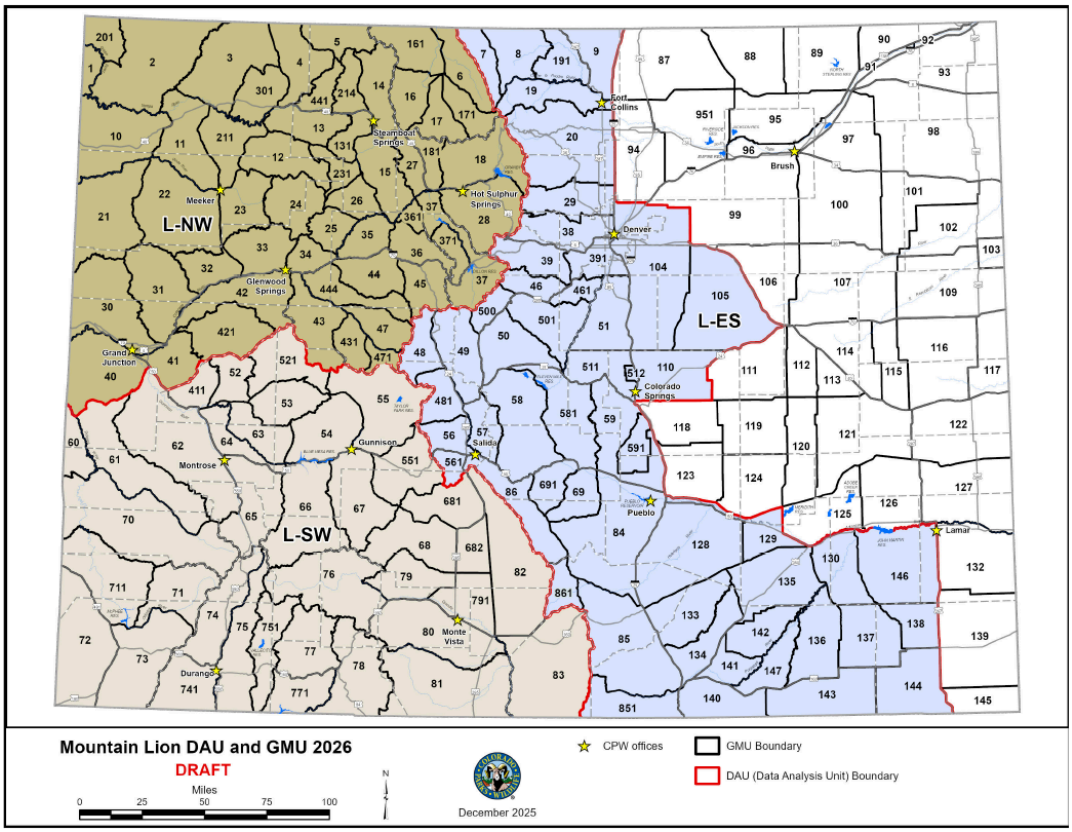
April Lion Season

An April lion season has been a management option in place since 2014. During last year's lion season (2025-2026) there were no units open in April.

The recommendation is to keep the April season closed statewide during April 2026.

Laura Clellan, Acting Director, Colorado Parks and Wildlife
Parks and Wildlife Commission: Richard Reading, Chair · James 'Jay' Tutchton, Vice-Chair · Eden Vardy, Secretary · Jessica Beaulieu
Frances Silva Blaney · John Emerick · Tai Jacober · Dallas May · Jack Murphy · Gabriel Otero

Map 1. 2026-2027 Colorado mountain lion management areas (Data Analysis Units).



Summary of Lion Harvest and Mortality

A summary of 3-year averages (2022-2024) for harvest, total human-caused mortality and adult female composition is presented below for each 2026-2027 lion DAU (Table 1). These metrics are evaluated annually against the respective DAU objectives and are used as the basis for harvest limit recommendations.

In last year's April 2024- March 2025 lion season, hunters in Colorado harvested 393 lions, including 246 males and 147 females.

Table 1. 2026-2027 Mountain Lion Harvest Limit Recommendations by Data Analysis Unit.

Colorado mountain lion harvest, total human-caused mortality and female proportion data for 2026-2027 harvest limit recommendations

			Harvest Limit			Harvest					Total Human-Caused Mortality			
									THRESHOLD					
Region	DAU	DAU Mgmt. Strategy	Current Year '25-'26	**Proposed Apr '26-Mar '27 Rcmmndtn**	Change	Prior Yr Harv '24-'25	3-Year Harvest Average	DAU Harvest Objective	Proportion of ADULT FEMALES in prior year harvest	Female Harvest Composition Threshold (**Adult F**)	Prior Year '24-'25	3-Yr Total Human-Caused Mortality Average	Total Human-Caused Mortality Threshold	**April 2026 status recommendation**
NW	**NW**	**Stable**	227	**227**	**0**	118	161	243	16.3%	Not to exceed 22% ADULT FEMALE in H in any year	138	184	269	Closed
NW	**NW**	**Glenwood SMA**	33	**33**	**0**	18	16	33	NA	NA	21	18	NA	Closed
SW	**SW**	**Stable**	185	**187**	**2**	127	151	187	18.1%	Not to exceed 22% ADULT FEMALE in H in any year	156	189	284	Closed
NE/SE	**ES**	**Stable**	160	**155**	**-5**	130	137	160	19.3%	Not to exceed 22% ADULT FEMALE in H in any year	181	196	214	Closed
NE/SE	**L-99**	**n/a**	5	**5**	0	0	0	n/a	n/a	n/a	0	0	n/a	Closed
		STATEWIDE TOTALS:	**610**	**607**	**-3**	**393**	**465**				**496**	**587**		
										Total Human-Caused Mortality includes harvest, control (CPW, APHIS, landowner), roadkills				

West Slope and East Slope Mountain Lion Management Plans

Following Commission approval of the East Slope Lion Management Plan in November of 2024, Colorado is now governed by two consistent and updated lion management plans.

The proportion of adult females in last year's harvest did not exceed the 22% threshold in any of Colorado's three DAUs (Table 1). Additionally, 3-year average total human-caused mortality levels did not exceed thresholds in any DAU (Table 1).

Changes in Harvest Limits

Staff recommends a net reduction of 3 from the previous year for the statewide 2026-2027 harvest limits. This would reduce the statewide harvest limit from 610 to 607.

L-ES DAU: a reduction of 5 lions to implement Year 2 of the East Slope Lion Plan. Harvest limit GMU group composition and harvest limits in the completed Upper Arkansas research project area are proposed for adjustment as outlined in the East Slope Lion Plan.

L-SW DAU: an increase of 2 lions in the LE054 harvest limit group (Gunnison Basin). This is due to the relatively high measured lion numbers from CPW's lion density project in the Gunnison Basin, rapid fulfillment of the harvest limit and is supported by the DAU being below the total human-caused mortality threshold.

Two figures have been included for your information and review as part of this memo:

Figure 1. Annual historic total female composition in statewide harvest. Based on management goals, CPW conducted outreach efforts aimed at voluntarily reducing female harvest during 2005-2007 and in 2024-2025.

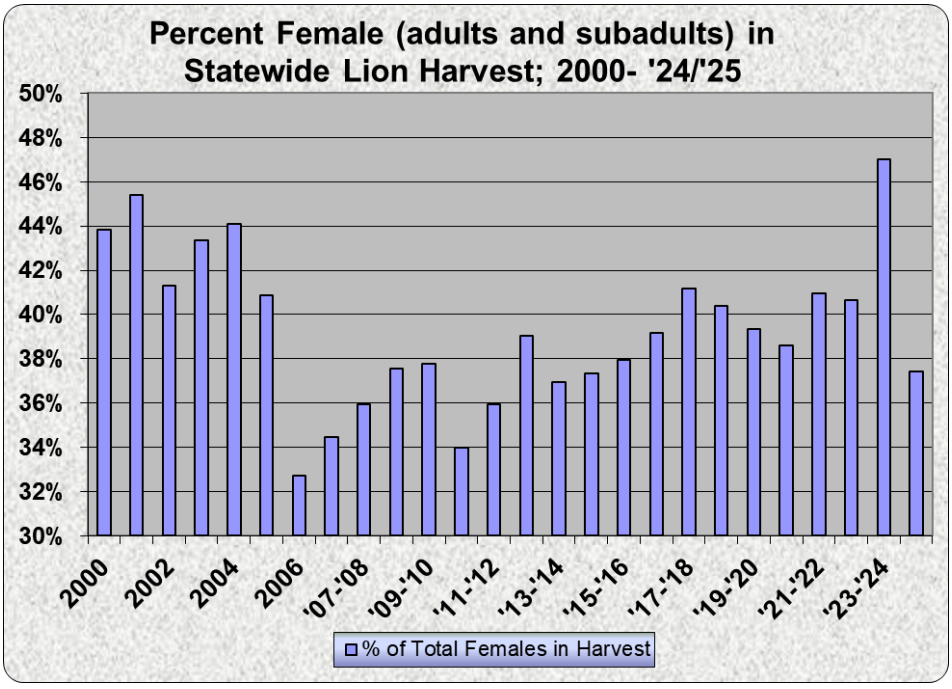
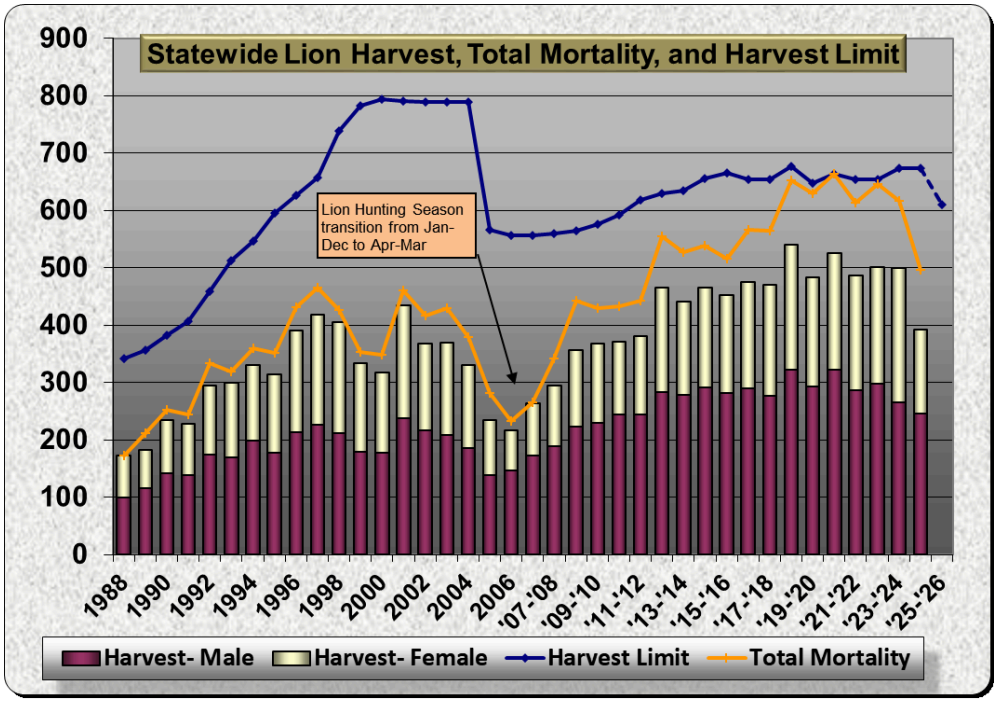



Figure 2. Historic mountain lion harvest limits and reported mortality (1988-present). Lion Management Plans (LMPs) were revised in 2004, and again in 2020 & 2024, affecting harvest limit levels from 2005-present.