

STATEMENT OF REASONS

CHAPTER 42

MOUNTAIN LION HUNTING SEASONS

W.S. § 23-1-302 directs and empowers the Commission to fix seasons and bag limits, open, shorten or close seasons on any species or sex of wildlife except predatory animals, predacious birds, protected animals and protected birds, and to consider establishing and regulating resident mountain lion pursuit seasons.

W.S. § 23-1-703 (e) empowers the Commission to determine the allocation of resident and nonresident mountain lion harvest.

W.S. § 23-2-307 (c) authorizes the Commission to require the purchase of a special management permit by any person participating in a resident mountain lion pursuit season.

W.S. § 23-3-109 (a) authorizes the Commission to regulate the use of dogs to pursue mountain lions.

The Commission proposes to amend this regulation to establish mountain lion pursuit seasons, address mountain lion mortality limits and may modify mountain lion hunting seasons. The Department sets hunting seasons based on public input, harvest data, winter big game mortality data, population monitoring and management objectives.

At the time of this filing, the 2022 mountain lion harvest information and 2022-2023 winter big game mortality data is not yet available to the Department. Individual hunt area season dates, hunt area limitations, hunt area boundaries and mortality limits may be modified as a result of harvest and mortality data currently being evaluated. Any additional proposed changes to hunting season dates, specific hunt area limitations, mortality limits, hunt area boundaries or other hunting provisions will be made available for public comment during all public meetings held around the state. In addition, an updated draft regulation will be made available for comment on the Department website once the pertinent harvest and mortality data becomes available.

Section 3 (b), the word “pursue” is replaced with “take” for clarity since this section addresses hunting regulations. Mountain lion mortality limits have been modified for some hunt areas in response to public concerns of a decreased prey base from recent winter mortality. Additional edits to this section are for clarity of existing regulations.

New Section 5 provides new regulations for resident mountain lion pursuit seasons. Subsection (a) denotes when a resident mountain lion pursuit season begins and ends; subsection (b) sets open hours for pursuing mountain lions with dogs; subsection (c) addresses pursuit season special management permit requirements; subsection (d) denotes rules for releasing mountain lions during pursuit seasons and also requires a resident houndsman to notify the

Department if a mountain lion is injured or killed during a pursuit season; and subsection (e) states that no person shall participate in a mountain lion pursuit season for commercial gain.

Minor grammatical and formatting edits have been incorporated but do not change the intent of the regulation.