

February 1, 2022

Colorado General Assembly
Senate Agriculture & Natural Resource
Committee
200 E Colfax Avenue
Denver, CO 80203

Colorado Department of Natural
Resources
Executive Director Dan Gibbs
1313 Sherman St.
Denver, CO 80203

CC: Senate President Leroy Garcia, Senate Majority Leader Steve Fenberg, Colorado
Parks and Wildlife Director Dan Prenzlow

Chairwoman Donovan and Members of the Colorado Senate Agriculture and Natural
Resources Committee,

We, the undersigned organizations, write to you on behalf of tens-of-thousands of
Colorado hunters, anglers, conservationists and outdoor enthusiasts. We do so to
respectfully express our united opposition to Colorado Senate Bill 22-031 – Prohibit
Hunting Bobcat, Lynx, and Mountain Lion.

We are steadfast in our commitment to ensuring that the management and
administration of wildlife policies in the state continues to be conducted by
professional biologists and associated wildlife management experts at Colorado Parks
and Wildlife (CPW) following a science-based approach. SB22-031 is intended to
directly circumvent the statutory authority and expertise of CPW and the CPW
Commission to advance the goals of special interests that do not reflect the opinions of
the majority of Coloradans.

SB22-031 is an egregious violation of the [North American Model of Wildlife
Conservation](#), the national benchmark of responsible wildlife management based on
the Public Trust Doctrine and a standard that has been adhered to by every fish and
game agency in the country since the late 1800s. If enacted, SB22-031 would be in
direct conflict with this benchmark and [Colorado State Statue 33-1-101](#), requiring
CPW to provide the greatest possible variety of wildlife-related recreational opportunity
to the people of this state and its visitors and to utilize hunting, trapping, and fishing
as the primary methods of effecting necessary wildlife harvests.

Colorado's mountain lion, bobcat, and lynx populations are flourishing thanks to the
dedicated efforts of CPW and sportspeople across the state. In fact, nearly seventy-five
percent of CPW's total wildlife budget, which is utilized to support conservation of all
game and non-game species alike, is funded through the sale of hunting, fishing, and
trapping licenses and excise taxes on products purchased by sportsmen and women
through the "user pays – public benefits" American System of Conservation Funding.
In addition to being the primary funders for Colorado wildlife conservation, including
conservation of non-game species, sportspeople play a vital role in managing
ecosystem health, wildlife populations and mitigating human-wildlife conflict,
especially when it comes to predators like mountain lions and bobcats.

If SB22-031 were to become law, it would eliminate the ability of CPW to apply a science-based approach to feline management that seeks to balance ecological carrying capacity and social carrying capacity, or society's ability to functionally coexist with wild animals.

If SB22-031 were to become law, CPW and the United States Department of Agriculture Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service Wildlife Services (USDA APHIS Wildlife Services) would be forced to intervene only *after* an animal or a population of animals has become problematic (e.g., attacks on livestock, pets, or people). This reactive approach will likely lead to increased conflict as feline populations expand into more urbanized areas. Such limitations on proactive management prescriptions would have far-reaching negative impacts on Colorado's livestock industry, public safety, and existing wildlife management strategies for other species. It is important to note, SB22-031 will NOT prohibit the lethal take of mountain lions and bobcats, but will rather transfer that responsibility to CPW staff and USDA APHIS Wildlife Services to manage problem felines. Such an approach will divert personnel and funding away from other conservation priorities, obligations to Colorado residents, and CPW objectives.

CPW, staffed by trained wildlife professionals, has the most comprehensive understanding of Colorado's fish and wildlife conservation needs, priorities, and challenges that cannot be rivaled by the legislature or other outside interests. It is imperative that the agency retain the flexibility to adapt to evolving needs of wildlife and wildlife habitat in our ever-changing world. Legislative directives such as this greatly limit that ability.

For the reasons stated above, we encourage the members of the Colorado Senate Agriculture Committee to vote "NO" on SB22-031. By so doing you will maintain Colorado's long-standing tradition of responsible, science-led wildlife management.

Sincerely,
Members of the Colorado Wildlife Conservation Project

