

AWA Statement: Cougar hunting allowed in Cypress Hills Interprovincial Park

On December 1, just as the open season began, cougar hunting was opened in Cypress Hills Interprovincial Park on the Alberta side, as well as expanding cougar hunting north. This change not only allows hunting of a relatively isolated population, it was also made in a manner that does not allow time for the public to raise concerns.

Cypress Hills Interprovincial Park holds the easternmost population of breeding cougars in Canada. The area was re-populated recently, after cougars were lost from their eastern range due mainly to hunting, trapping and deforestation. Although cougars began to return to Cypress Hills in the 1990s, it was only in 2006 that a breeding population was confirmed. Some biologists hope this population may allow cougars to re-establish in parts of Eastern Canada.

As with other predators, cougars help to control prey populations and improve vegetation health. Cypress Hills is an area with abundant deer and elk; these grazers, along with extensive cattle use, were leading to overgrazing and degradation of the ecosystem. Cougar return is helping to reduce overgrazing, through [direct predation and by encouraging deer to roam](#). In Zion National Park, cougar presence was found to [improve cottonwood health and protect riverbanks](#).

Cougar hunting is not only detrimental to the population, but can increase conflict. Trophy hunting of cougars often targets large, healthy and mature cougars. This creates a selection pressure on the population that results in only the smaller and weaker cougars surviving, eventually weakening the population. It also disrupts the social structure. [Younger males move into](#) the territories of animals lost through hunting, and the inexperienced and aggressive younger males are more likely to attack cattle and other livestock, leading to [higher rates of human-wildlife conflict](#).

In addition, the timeline of this change suggests the Minister deliberately tried to hide the decision and give concerned citizens no time to respond. Cypress Hills was included in a Cougar Management Area through a Ministerial Order in March. The same Ministerial Order also removed the requirement to update cougar quotas before December 1 of the year they apply. However, quotas were only established for Cypress Hills and other new Cougar Management Areas on December 1. This implies the decision has been planned since March, although was only made in December, at the start of the open season. The timeline of events indicates a government purposefully trying to conceal their actions, and is not how we expect a democratic government to act.

As with other changes that open Alberta to hunting, this decision had no justification or public consultation. We demand that these changes be reversed until there is public consultation and we fully understand the consequences of hunting on Alberta's landscape.

Timeline of events:

Cougar management areas and quotas are found mainly on two Government of Alberta sites: My Wild Alberta, and through official documents uploaded to Open Government program. The quotas established on these sites are not always the same.

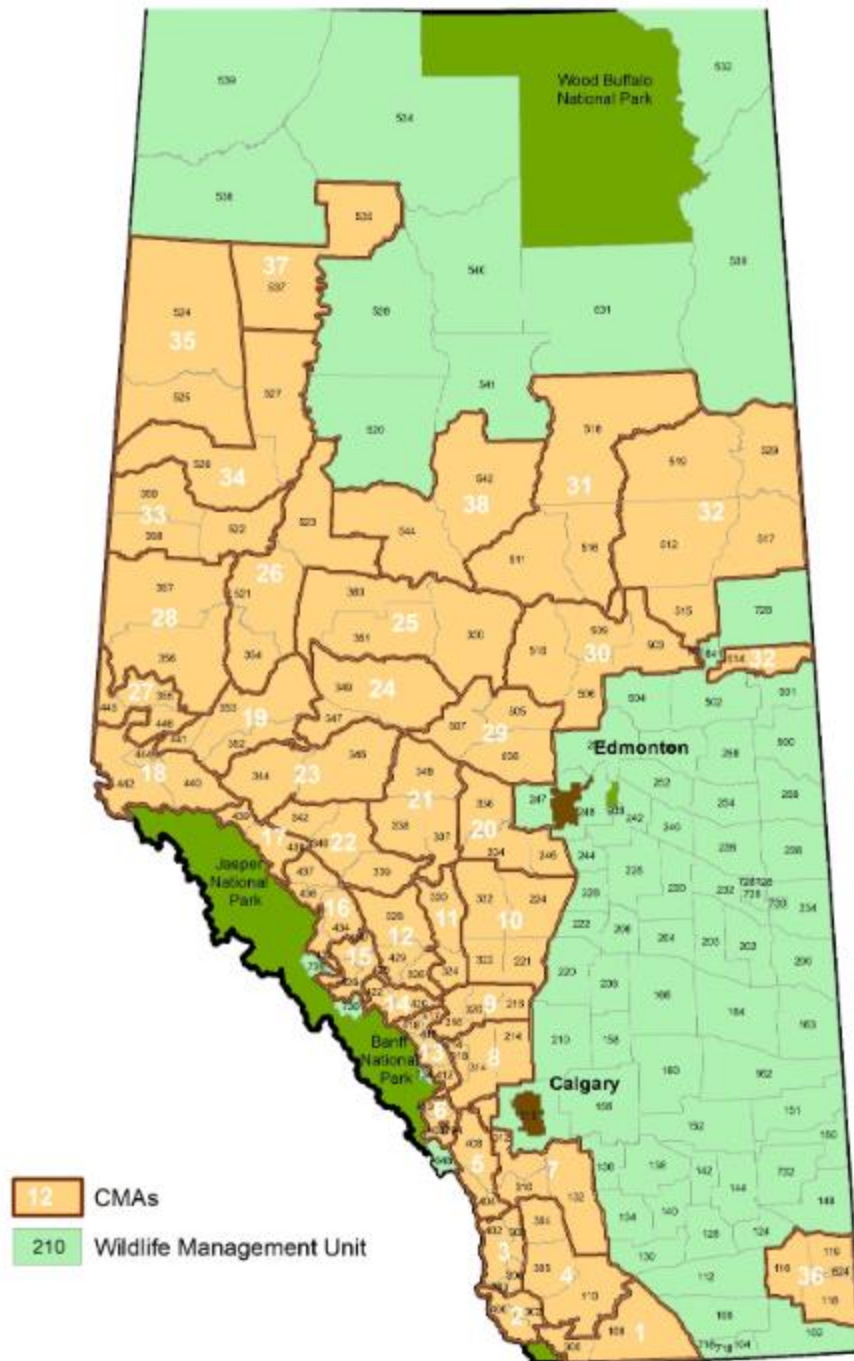
March 26: [2023-2024 quotas for cougars](#) are updated on Open Government. Female cougar quota is more than doubled. AWA is informed this change is because [“some stakeholders believe cougar numbers are unacceptably high.”](#) There is no population data provided to support this.

March 28: [Ministerial Order 37/2024](#) establishes Cougar Management Areas 33-38. Area 36 includes Cypress Hills. The order also removes the requirement for the Minister to establish open season quotas “before December 1 of any year for which they are to apply.”

May 6: [Cougar hunting season status summary](#) on My Wild Alberta webpage is updated. [Cougar management areas](#) map is posted. Cougar Management Areas 33-38 are included, and quotas in new management areas are set to zero. Quotas are not updated on Open Government page where the 2023-2024 quotas for cougars was posted.

December 1: [Cougar hunting season status summary](#) on My Wild Alberta webpage is updated, allowing hunting of cougars in Cougar Management Areas 33-38, including Cypress Hills Interprovincial Park.

Cougar Management Areas in Alberta



[Cougar Management Areas in Alberta map](#), posted to Open Government on May 6, 2024.

Each Cougar Management Area is comprised of one or more Wildlife Management Units. There is a separate quota for male and female cougars in each Cougar Management Area. The season in each area closes independently for each sex when the quota has been filled. Hunters must call the cougar hotline at 1-800-661-3729 (toll-free) each day prior to hunting to determine which Cougar Management Areas are open. For holders of a cougar special licence (outfitted non-resident or non-resident alien hunters), quotas do not apply, and the season remains open for either sex until the last day of February.



Map taken from page 4 of [Cougar Hunting in Alberta Guide](#), posted to Open Government November 28, 2019

[Cougar Hunting Season Status Summary Tables](#), from the Cougar Hunting Seasons and CMAs guide, posted to My Wild Alberta. Older tables retrieved using Internet Archive.

Data updated: December 01, 2024 @ 4:44 PM

Cougar Management Area	Male Quota	Female Quota	Male Season Status	Female Season Status
1	2	1	Open	Open
2	2	2	Open	Open
3	2	2	Open	Open
4	2	1	Open	Open
5	2	1	Open	Open
6	2	2	Open	Open
7	2	2	Open	Open
8	2	1	Open	Open
9	2	1	Open	Open
10	2	1	Open	Open
11	2	1	Open	Closed
12	2	2	Open	Open
13	2	2	Open	Open
14	2	2	Open	Open
15	2	2	Open	Open
16	3	2	Open	Open
17	2	3	Open	Open
18	2	3	Open	Open
19	2	2	Open	Open

20	1	1	Open	Open
21	3	2	Open	Open
22	2	2	Open	Open
23	3	2	Open	Open
24	2	2	Open	Open
25	1	2	Open	Open
26	1	2	Open	Open
27	1	3	Open	Open
28	2	2	Open	Open
29	1	2	Open	Open
30	1	2	Open	Open
31	1	2	Open	Open
32	1	2	Open	Open
33	1	1	Open	Open
34	1	1	Open	Open
35	1	2	Open	Open
36	1	1	Open	Open
37	1	2	Open	Open
38	1	2	Open	Open

Data updated: May 06, 2024 @ 3:36 PM

Cougar Management Area	Male Quota	Female Quota	Male Season Status	Female Season Status
1	2	2	Closed	Closed
2	2	2	Closed	Closed
3	3	2	Closed	Closed
4	3	2	Closed	Closed
5	3	2	Closed	Closed
6	1	2	Closed	Closed
7	2	2	Closed	Closed
8	2	2	Closed	Closed
9	2	2	Closed	Closed
10	2	2	Closed	Closed
11	3	2	Closed	Closed
12	4	2	Closed	Closed
13	2	2	Closed	Closed
14	2	2	Closed	Closed
15	2	2	Closed	Closed
16	3	2	Closed	Closed
17	2	2	Closed	Closed
18	2	3	Closed	Closed
19	1	3	Closed	Closed
20	1	2	Closed	Closed

21	3	2	Closed	Closed
22	2	2	Closed	Closed
23	3	3	Closed	Closed
24	2	3	Closed	Closed
25	1	3	Closed	Closed
26	2	3	Closed	Closed
27	1	3	Closed	Closed
28	2	2	Closed	Closed
29	1	2	Closed	Closed
30	1	2	Closed	Closed
31	1	3	Closed	Closed
32	1	3	Closed	Closed
33	0	0	Closed	Closed
34	0	0	Closed	Closed
35	0	0	Closed	Closed
36	0	0	Closed	Closed
37	0	0	Closed	Closed
38	0	0	Closed	Closed

Data updated: January 09, 2024 @ 4:32 PM

Cougar Management Area	Male Quota	Female Quota	Male Season Status	Female Season Status
1	2	1	Open	Open
2	2	1	Open	Open
3	3	1	Closed	Open
4	3	1	Open	Closed
5	3	1	Closed	Open
6	1	1	Open	Open
7	2	1	Open	Open
8	2	1	Closed	Open
9	2	1	Closed	Open
10	2	1	Closed	Closed
11	3	1	Closed	Closed
12	4	1	Closed	Closed
13	2	1	Closed	Closed
14	2	1	Closed	Open
15	2	1	Open	Open
16	3	1	Open	Open
17	2	1	Open	Open
18	2	1	Open	Open
19	1	1	Open	Open
20	1	1	Closed	Closed

21	3	1	Open	Closed
22	2	1	Open	Closed
23	3	1	Open	Closed
24	2	1	Open	Open
25	1	1	Open	Open
26	2	1	Open	Open
27	1	1	Open	Open
28	2	1	Open	Open
29	1	1	Open	Open
30	1	1	Closed	Open
31	1	1	Open	Open
32	1	1	Open	Open