
THIRD READING

Bill No: SB 1397
Author: Alvarado-Gil (R)
Amended: 5/14/26
Vote: 32

SENATE NATURAL RES. & WATER COMMITTEE: 7-0, 4/14/26
AYES: Becker, Seyarto, Allen, Cabaldon, Cortese, Grove, Stern

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE: 7-0, 5/14/26
AYES: Cervantes, Seyarto, Cabaldon, Dahle, Grayson, Richardson, Wahab

SUBJECT: Mountain Lions: human-mountain lion conflicts program: scientific research

SOURCE: Author

DIGEST: This bill requires the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (department), contingent upon an appropriation, to maintain, enhance, and expand its human-mountain lion conflicts program in one of the department's regions to protect public health and safety, and requires the department to continue and expand its scientific research effort to develop and evaluate methods to deter mountain lions from entering communities and to prevent habituation to humans, as provided, among other provisions.

ANALYSIS:

Existing law:

- 1) Establishes the department. States that the department's mission "is to manage California's diverse fish, wildlife, and plant resources, and the habitats upon which they depend, for their ecological value and for their use and enjoyment by the public," and provides that its core programs include biodiversity conservation, enforcement, and hunting, fishing, and public use, among others. (Fish and Game Code (FGC) §712.1)

- 2) Establishes the mountain lion as a specially protected mammal under the laws of this state. (FGC §4800)
 - a) Makes it illegal to take, injure, possess, transport, import, or sell a mountain lion or a product of a mountain lion, except as specifically provided for. (FGC §4800)
 - b) Defines “take” to mean hunt, pursue, catch, capture, or kill, or attempt to hunt, pursue, catch, capture, or kill. (FGC §86)
- 3) Authorizes the department to remove or take any mountain lion, or authorize an appropriate local agency with public safety responsibility to remove or take any mountain lion that is perceived to be an imminent threat to public health or safety. (FGC §4801)
- 4) Requires nonlethal procedures to be used when removing or taking any mountain lion that has not been designated as an imminent threat to public health or safety. (FGC §4801.5)
 - a) Defines nonlethal procedures to mean procedures that include capturing, pursuing, anesthetizing, temporarily possessing, temporarily injuring, marking, attaching to or surgically implanting monitoring or recognition devices, providing veterinary care, transporting, hazing, rehabilitating, releasing, or taking no action. (FGC §4801.5)
 - b) Authorizes the department to authorize qualified individuals, educational institutions, governmental agencies, or nongovernmental organizations to implement nonlethal procedures on a mountain lion, as provided. (FGC §4801.5)
- 5) Authorizes any person or employee or agent whose livestock or other property is being or has been injured, damaged, or destroyed by a mountain lion to report that to the department and request a permit to take the mountain lion. (FGC §4802)
 - a) Requires the department to immediately take the action necessary to confirm that there has been depredation by a mountain lion as quickly as possible, but in no event later than 48 hours after receiving the report. Requires the department to promptly issue a permit to take the depredating mountain lion if satisfied of depredation by the mountain lion. (FGC §4803)
- 6) Requires that the department condition the depredation permit to expire within 10 days of issuance, for the pursuit to start within one mile of the depredation site, and limit the pursuit to within a 10 mile radius of the depredation site in

order to ensure that only the depredating mountain lion will be taken. (FGC §4804)

- 7) Authorizes the immediate take of a mountain lion pursuing, injuring, or killing livestock or domestic animals by the owner thereof, as provided, and requires departmental notification within 72 hours. Requires the department to investigate, as specified. (FGC §4807)
- 8) Authorizes the department to authorize certain entities to conduct scientific research involving mountain lions. (FGC §4810)

This bill:

- 1) Requires the department, contingent upon a legislative appropriation, to maintain, enhance, and expand its human-mountain lion conflicts program in order to protect public health and safety in one of the department's regions.
 - a) Requires the department to identify which one of its regions has been most impacted by human-wildlife conflict. Authorizes the department to consider certain factors in making that determination, as specified.
- 2) Requires the conflicts program to include public education and outreach regarding methods to minimize conflict including methods to protect livestock and domestic animals and the development of best practices to minimize conflicts.
- 3) Requires the department to continue and expand its scientific research effort to develop and evaluate methods to deter mountain lions from entering communities and to prevent habituation to humans, as provided.
- 4) Requires the department to consult with the Department of Parks and Recreation and local agencies to ensure that department and department-supported activities conform to law and regulation.
- 5) States legislative intent that the department work closely with the community and local leaders in the specified region on implementation of the conflicts program, research and other efforts, as provided. Requires the department to regularly attend public meetings of local government entities in the specified region to provide updates on this implementation, and updates on depredation permitting, as provided.
- 6) Requires the department director to appear at a hearing of Senate and Assembly relevant policy committees, as specified, annually to provide an update on

implementation of the conflicts program, research and other efforts, as specified, until the 2034 calendar year.

- 7) Requires the department on or by October 1, 2031 to prepare and submit a legislative report to relevant committees describing the conflicts program, research and other efforts developed, including results, the number of department personnel involved, and recommendations to further improve the efforts to protect human health and safety, as provided.
- 8) Sets a five year sunset to January 1, 2033, and sunsets the legislative report requirement on January 1, 2036, as specified.
- 9) Makes a legislative finding and declaration that these provisions are consistent with and further the purposes of the California Wildlife Protection Act of 1990. Makes numerous additional relevant legislative findings and declarations, as provided.

[NOTE: Additional background information regarding this bill can be found in the Senate Natural Resources and Water Committee's analysis.]

FISCAL EFFECT: Appropriation: No Fiscal Com.: Yes Local: No

According to the Senate Appropriations Committee:

- Unknown but significant ongoing costs, likely in the low millions of dollars annually (General Fund), for CDFW to oversee all provisions of the bill in one of its regions, which would include, but not be limited to, public education and outreach; enforcement activities; data collection and analysis; health and disease surveillance; forensic interpretation of samples; and the evaluation of measurable performance objectives with an emphasis on human-mountain lion conflict, as well as technical assistance, consultation, and support to administer, implement, and enforce the program.

SUPPORT: (Verified 5/14/26)

Backcountry Hunters and Anglers
California Rifle and Pistol Association
Inyo-Mono County Cattlewomen
Mzuri Safari Club
National Wild Turkey Federation – California State Chapter
Riverside County Sheriff's Office
Safari Club International – San Francisco Bay Chapter
San Diego County Wildlife Federation

The Black Brant Group

The Honorable Autumn Andahl, Supervisor, District 2, County of Calaveras

The Honorable Caroline Schirato, Angels Camp Mayor, City of Angels

The Honorable David Griffith, Supervisor, District 5, County of Alpine

The Honorable Gary W. Redman, Sheriff-Coroner, Amador County Sheriff's Office

The Honorable Jennifer Roeser, Supervisor, District 4, County of Inyo

The Honorable John McGarva, Coroner-Sheriff, Lassen County Sheriff's Department

The Honorable Patrick Crew, Supervisor, Board Chair, County of Amador

The Honorable Scott E. Marcellin, Supervisor, District 3, County of Inyo

The Honorable Trina Orrill, Supervisor, District 1, County of Inyo

The Honorable Will Wadelton, Supervisor, District 5, County of Inyo

Tulare Basin Wetlands Association

OPPOSITION: (Verified 5/14/26)

Animal Wellness Action

Center for a Humane Economy

ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT: According to the author, "Human-mountain lion encounters have been increasing across the state in the past few years putting the public at serious risk of harm. A young man was killed in my district in 2024 and his sibling seriously injured by a mountain lion. This can't keep happening, we need to do more to protect the public. SB 1397 seeks to build upon the Department of Fish and Wildlife's human-mountain lion conflicts program by requiring them to enhance and expand their program to protect public health and safety."

ARGUMENTS IN OPPOSITION: Writing in opposition, the Center for a Humane Economy states that "we support efforts to promote public safety and reduce human-wildlife conflict, SB 1397 is not supported by the best available scientific or empirical evidence and risks undermining California's longstanding protections for mountain lions."

They add that mountain lion attacks on humans are exceedingly rare, note that depredation data may not be reliable indicators or trends, research has shown that removal of apex predators can worsen, not reduce, conflict, the bill does not

address primary drivers of conflict, such as habitat fragmentation and the effectiveness of nonlethal deterrence methods remains uncertain.

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