



WYOMING GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT

5400 Bishop Blvd. Cheyenne, WY 82006

Phone: (307) 777-4600 Fax: (307) 777-4699

wgfd.wyo.gov

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June 19, 2019

Wyoming Untrapped
P.O. Box 9004
Jackson, WY 83002

Dear Ms. Robertson:

We received your request to close bobcat trapping and hunting in Management Area 1 (MA 1) for the upcoming 2019-2020 season. In your letter, you indicate a declining population is evident from decreasing bobcat harvest, a high proportion of females/juveniles in the harvest and increased trapper effort. In addition, you suggest initiating bobcat research during the closure to determine if sufficient bobcats exist to sustain a bobcat trapping season.

Multiple years with zero harvest are not uncommon in MA 1. A review of our Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) data (made available to Wyoming Untrapped via an information request submitted in 2018) also found zero harvest in 2003-2004 and 2015-2016. Harvest has been low and variable in MA 1 during other years as well. Two bobcats were harvested in 2005-2006, 2016-2017 and 2017-2018; and three bobcats harvested in 2008-2009, 2010-2011, and 2014-2015. In only four out of the last 15 years, ten or more bobcats were harvested in MA 1. Our records indicate bobcat harvest in MA1 is typically low, with a median annual harvest of three bobcats per year since 2003.

Additional review of the age and sex data of harvested bobcats did not indicate a higher than normal proportion of females or juveniles in recent harvest or over time. Our data indicate there were no juveniles harvested in the last 4 years (2014-2015 to 2017-2018), and only 50% (2 of 4) of harvested bobcats were female in 2016-2017.

Despite the low harvest in MA 1, bobcat abundance is not catastrophically declining. Our efforts to model bobcat abundance in Wyoming using statistical population reconstruction techniques were completed in the last year. Our statewide Wyoming model indicates bobcat abundance increased from the mid 1990's to the mid 2000's, declined from 2007-2013, and then increased from 2013 to present. Despite the mid 2000's decline, the model indicates bobcat abundance is at, or above, 1990's levels. Furthermore, this model demonstrates that harvest is only one of several factors to consider when assessing species abundance.

Harvest is influenced by trapper effort and in Teton County, furbearer/trapping license sales are consistently low. From 2008-2018, licenses sold to individuals with a Teton County zip code ranged from a low of 15 in 2009 to a high of 32 in 2012 and 2018, with an average of 23 per year. The annual furbearer/trapping license sales are an indication that trapping in Teton County, and by association MA 1, has been and remains low.

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While MA 1 has a lower harvest rate, it is much smaller and less accessible than other bobcat management areas in the state. This area also has a lower road density, smaller total area (4482 vs. >11000 mi. sq.), and a greater proportion of areas closed to trapping (Grand Teton Park, National Elk Refuge, etc). Thus, MA 1 not only has less area open to trapping but is less accessible to trappers. Given these constraints, we expect bobcat harvest in MA 1 to be lower than elsewhere in the state.

Based on this information and review of past harvest trends, we do not support the immediate closure of MA 1. The Wyoming Game and Fish Department manages bobcats using the best available science and when needed will conduct any necessary research to inform and support this management.

Thank you for your comments regarding bobcat management in Wyoming.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Doug Brimeyer". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Doug" and last name "Brimeyer" clearly legible.

Doug Brimeyer,
Deputy Chief, Wildlife

DB/eg/ws/tw

cc: Brian Nesvik, Director
Rick King, Chief, Wildlife Division