

Steve Pavlik
4149 East Waverly Street - Tucson, Arizona 85712
520-327-0708 - spavlik@gainusa.com

J. Paul Cornes, Manager
Kofa National Wildlife Refuge
356 W. 1st Street
Yuma, Arizona 85364

December 26, 2006

Dear Mr. Cornes;

The purpose of this letter is to express my opposition to the proposed Mountain Lion Hunt Plan for the Kofa National Wildlife Refuge and to request a 60 day extension. In sum, I support the “No Action” alternative to the draft plan you are now considering.

First let me state emphatically that I am not anti-hunting or even anti-lion hunting. In fact, I am a hunter myself. But the proposal to hunt lions on the Kofa is exactly the type of plan that casts a dark shadow on all hunters. I read, re-read, and read again the proposal and all of the information provided on your website. *The main fact that struck me was the absolute lack of scientific data that you have on the number and habits of lions, and what impact the killing of even one lion – potentially a breeding female - would have on the small population of these predators that inhabit the Kofa.* This appears to be a plan that is completely absent of scientific basis or scientific need. A few lions have been unfortunate enough to step in front of remote cameras placed at water holes – and immediately members of the Yuma Rod and Gun Club, the Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD), and apparently the management of the Kofa National Wildlife Refuge sets the wheels in motion to kill one. This is exactly the type of mentality that turns the general public against hunting, and exactly the type of mismanagement that led to the passage of Proposition 117 in California that banned all lion hunting. As I read the proposal I kept asking myself: *why* are these people pushing so hard to kill these mountain lions? Then I read AGFD Commissioner Joe Melton’s comment about wanting to remove *all* lions from the refuge, and I read your own comment (*Arizona Daily Star*, December 4, 2006) that it “was unclear whether mountain lions or the drought are contributing the most to sheep decline” ... and I understood.

No one questions that sheep and mule deer numbers are in decline. No one questions that lions occasionally kill sheep and certainly kill mule deer. Yet, to the best of my knowledge, not one desert bighorn sheep (and only one mule deer) mortality has been attributed to a mountain lion. How can you justify your statement to the press – and ultimately to an uninformed public? I believe that your comments were misleading and served only to cast completely unwarranted suspicion on lions as a source of sheep decline.

The day has long past when we use predators as scapegoats for the decline of other game animals like sheep and mule deer. Intelligent wildlife managers now know that less lions

do not necessarily mean more sheep and deer. Wildlife – including game animals – *and especially on a national wildlife refuge like the Kofa* – is not the private property of any government agency (such as AGFD or the Kofa National Wildlife Refuge) or any particular public interest group (such as the Yuma Rod and Gun Club) - wildlife belongs to all of us. And every species of wildlife – including mountain lions which are an integral part of the natural ecosystem – have the right to exist.

If the AGFD and the management of the Kofa National Wildlife Refuge were genuinely concerned about the decline of desert bighorn sheep and mule deer, they would jointly declare a complete moratorium on the hunting of these species until the current drought has ended.

It is for these reasons that I again encourage you to adopt the “No Action” alternative to the lion hunting proposal - and if the plan is still to be considered – that an extension of 60 days be held during which time additional written comments can be taken *and public hearings held to gather oral testimony* for the purpose of determining the *scientific merits* of this plan.

Thank you for your time and cooperation on this issue.

Respectfully,

Steve Pavlik