

1. What reason is prompting the kill?

The Arizona Game and Fish Department recommended removing the mountain lions in the interest of public safety. The mountain lions were exhibiting what experts consider to be danger signs. This department and other wildlife agencies have documented that certain behaviors that have been observed in the Sabino Canyon mountain lions are associated with a high likelihood of attacks on humans. These behaviors include cougars that are unyielding to humans at distances of fewer than 50 yards (some were within 10 yards), daylight active lions, and more recently, a mountain lion that was daylight active in proximity to a schoolyard.

2. What other methods can be implemented or explored, instead of killing them?

Mountain lion experts considered a list of possible actions to address the problem mountain lions in the canyon. Unfortunately, strategies that are appropriate for other wildlife, such as relocation or human reconditioning, have not proven successful with mountain lions. Research indicates that adult mountain lions do not thrive in captivity. In addition, there are few opportunities for placement. In this case, a suitable rehabilitation facility was identified in Arizona. Putting an adult mountain lion in captivity is never a preferred alternative.

3. If cats are relocated will there be liability (paid by taxpayers), if the cats cause problems when relocated like the Mt. Lemmon bears?

While potential liability is always a reasonable concern, a more important deciding factor against relocation is that any problem mountain lion would also pose a public safety risk in the area where it is relocated. Mountain lions are also territorial—any relocated mountain lion could kill or be killed by a mountain lion in the established territory where it is sent. A relocated mountain lion could also displace another cougar, causing it to end up in an urbanized area. When dealing with wildlife, there can be a ripple effect of consequences to actions such as relocation.

4. Please explain why the Arizona Game and Fish Commission has not collected scientific data using radio collars/monitors to learn about which lions are behaving (how and where) and then using dehumanizing/aversion methods to discourage the lions from being around humans?

Research shows that dehumanizing or aversion methods have not worked on mountain lions. It is currently not a viable, reliable or effective option in the cougar management toolbox for wildlife agencies. When public safety is at issue, trying an unproven technique would not be a prudent or reasonable response.

5. Why did the Arizona Game and Fish Commission not support the passage of S.B. 1347?

The idea or concept of the legislation was valid but the original draft had some provisions the commission was not comfortable with. The commission was working to resolve those issues.

6. What is the Game and Fish Commission's long-range plan concerning mountain lion management?

The Arizona Game and Fish Commission has an adopted strategic plan for mountain lion management. The commission recognizes that predators are an integral part of the ecosystem. The long-range plan for mountain lions is to continue employing the recognized best management practices that are available. Arizona enjoys a robust mountain lion population. The commission and the department are in the process of fine-tuning statewide mountain lion management. For instance, by establishing harvest objectives and liberalizing bag limits in very specific areas, the commission and department are trying to focus sport

harvest on areas where mountain lion removal is necessary to help struggling populations of bighorn sheep, deer and antelope.

7. Can't you downsize the numbers of people going through the canyon?

The Arizona Game and Fish Department has no control over the number of people visiting Sabino Canyon. The U.S. Forest Service has land management authority for Sabino Canyon, which is a part of the Santa Catalina Ranger District of the Coronado National Forest. It should be noted that the Forest Service has been a cooperative partner with the Game and Fish Department when it comes to managing the wildlife in the canyon. The Forest Service also has public safety concerns based on the behavior patterns of the Sabino cougars. However, the real question is whether mountain lions could still pose a risk in the surrounding area. The recent capture of a lion very near Esperero Canyon Middle School as well as a visit by a cougar around noontime to the schoolyard should be taken into consideration.

8. Why haven't the Game and Fish Commission tried various aversion methods (rubber bullets, salt buckshots, loud noises, and cougar scenting)?

Aversion techniques have not proven effective with mountain lions. When it comes to public safety, experimenting with unproven methods that have not worked in other locations would not be prudent or reasonable.

9. Why not wait a couple more months for the wildlife to move back up the mountain? The food source at the lower elevations has increased because of the fires and drought. Have you looked at these reasons and considered giving the mountain lions an area, which they can live and thrive until there is a natural correction on Mt. Lemmon?

Research and practical experience by mountain lion experts shows that mountain lions often stick to established patterns, especially when they are finding easy prey items. The abundant prey in the urban-wildland fringe area around Sabino Canyon would likely hold the mountain lions there, or at least, that area would continue being part of their territory. It would not be reasonable to just "wait and see" when there is a public safety issue.

10. What is the Game and Fish Commission's primary mission and what role does wildlife predators have in this mission? How has it been executed?

The Arizona Game and Fish Department's primary mission is to conserve, enhance and restore Arizona's diverse wildlife resources and habitats through aggressive protection and management programs, and to provide wildlife resources and safe watercraft recreation for the enjoyment, appreciation and use of present and future generations. Predators play a key role in the ecosystem and in most instances, do not require what one might call "active management" efforts. However, because of their very nature, predators can become public safety issues. Because predators can also impact other species, they can become the focus of active management efforts to conserve those other species, such as bighorn sheep, pronghorn antelope, and deer. Such management actions typically occur in very specific areas with strategic goals set to assist the wildlife species in jeopardy.

11. Will the Commission consider creating an Ad Hoc Citizen's Committee consisting of biologists, wildlife management, elected officials prior to "crisis" situations to make recommendations on humans and wildlife coexisting peacefully?

The commission and department are planning a public workshop in Tucson on Saturday, May 1 to start a statewide process of collecting public opinion on mountain lion management. That process also entails

working with stakeholders and others to refine management strategies, such as the protocols for dealing with predators posing a public safety issue.

12. What is the documented danger from rattlesnakes, black widow and brown recluse spiders, scorpions, centipedes, feral dogs, cactus spine infections, etc. measured against harm inflicted by mountain lions? What are your plans to protect the public from these dangers?

Obviously, the world is full of dangers. In most instances, increasing public awareness is the key to arming people with information to protect themselves. When a large wild carnivore crosses the threshold of being “potentially dangerous” and enters the realm of being a “likely threat” to people, this department’s response changes accordingly. From a public safety viewpoint, it’s a common sense progression.

13. How do you know that the mountain lions that are removed are the same lions that were sighted?

Wildlife biologists are confident that the mountain lion caught in Sabino Canyon was the same cougar sighted at a nearby school. The mountain lion was captured approximately a half-mile northeast of Esperero Canyon Middle School and about one-quarter mile away from a home.

14. Why can’t we establish supplemental feeding stations placed to pull mountain lions and other wildlife back into uninhabited areas?

Intentionally feeding wildlife is not a good idea and has the potential to create future human-wildlife conflicts. It would also not be practical to provide “feeding stations” with the wild game mountain lions are accustomed to eating. To use any other high protein food item (such as processed dog or cat food) would be to habituate cougars to human-type food and further exacerbate the human-wildlife interaction problem.

15. Now that the lions are over populating the Catalinas what will the impact be on the deer and sheep populations?

The Catalina Mountains are considered to be high-density mountain lion country but that does not mean cougars are “over populating” the area. Current research being conducted by the Arizona Game and Fish Department in the 3-Bar Wildlife Area near Roosevelt Lake indicates that during times of drought, mountain lions can have a more significant impact on deer populations. That study is still underway. Wildlife biology is still a young science, and as more is learned about wildlife, especially wildlife interactions, the state’s wildlife managers try to employ that knowledge.

16. How does the Game and Fish Commission have such autonomy? Is it funded with tax dollars? Who does the Game and Fish Commission report to?

The Game and Fish Commission is a five-member civilian policy-making board that oversees the Game and Fish Department. Commission members are appointed by the governor to serve staggered five-year terms. The commission form of government was created in this state, and others, to help insulate wildlife management from politics, yet infuse a healthy degree of citizen government into the professional wildlife management process. The commission and department do not receive any tax dollars from the state’s general fund. Funding comes primarily from the sale of hunting and fishing licenses, from federal excise taxes on sporting goods such as rifles and fishing poles, and from the Heritage Fund.

17. How many people have been attacked by lions in the last 10 years in Arizona?

There has been one documented mountain lion attack on humans in the past 10 years in Arizona. However, there have been numerous cougar attacks on people in other states.

18. In the past 4 years, how many lions have been killed? How many lions have been relocated?

No mountain lions have been relocated in the past four years. Four have been killed for public safety reasons, including the cougar that attacked a little girl at Bartlett Lake.

19. What kind of actions have the Arizona Game and Fish Commission done to educate the public about mountain lions and potential encounters with them?

The Arizona Game and Fish Department has delivered, and continues to deliver, educational materials and programs to residents statewide. While many people enjoy watching wildlife, providing food for many species creates an imbalance between predator and prey. In the case of Sabino Canyon, some local residents fed javelina, deer and rabbits; the higher-than-normal population of these animals provides a rich environment for cougars, drawing them closer to people and residences.

The department has been working with municipalities and counties statewide to craft laws designed to discourage the feeding of wildlife and make it a crime to do so. In the past, we have held talks with Coconino County and the city of Scottsdale. In February, the department sent a letter to the city of Tucson and to Pima County, requesting a cooperative effort to craft wildlife feeding ordinances. As the boundaries between people and wildlife continue to become blurred through urban expansion, conflicts between humans and wildlife will increase. It is the belief of the Arizona Game and Fish Department that laws prohibiting wildlife feeding will provide additional tools for working with citizens to protect wildlife.

20. How does the Game and Fish Commission advise users of the National Forest to respond when encountering a lion?

From bears to mountain lions, the Arizona Game and Fish Department has many educational programs. For mountain lions, the department has tips posted on the web—azgfd.com—and has printed materials available by mail, in person and through distribution at public events and meetings statewide.

The department has disseminated the specific following tips in regards to mountain lion encounters.

- Do not hike, jog or ride your bicycle alone in mountain lion country: Go in groups, with adults supervising children.
- Keep children close to you: Observations of captured wild mountain lions reveal that the animals seem especially drawn to children. Keep children in your sight at all times.
- Do not approach a mountain lion: Most mountain lions will try to avoid a confrontation. Give them a way to escape.
- Do not run from a mountain lion: Running may stimulate a mountain lion's instinct to chase. Instead, stand and face the animal. Make eye contact. If there are small children there, pick them up if possible so they don't panic and run. Although it may be awkward, pick them up without bending over or turning away from the mountain lion.
- Do not crouch or bend over: A person squatting or bending over looks a lot like a four-legged prey animal. When in mountain lion country, avoid squatting, crouching or bending over, even when picking up children.
- Appear larger: Raise your arms. Open your jacket if you are wearing one. Again, pick up small children. Throw stones, branches, or whatever you can reach without crouching or turning your back. Wave your arms slowly and speak firmly in a loud voice. The idea is to convince the mountain lion that you are not prey and that you may be a danger to it.
- Fight back if attacked: Many potential victims have fought back successfully with rocks, sticks, caps, jackets, garden tools and their bare hands. Since a mountain lion usually tries to bite the head or neck, try to remain standing and face the attacking animal.

21. Dr. Paul Beier is at NAU. He has made a thorough study of lions and attacks on humans. Has the Arizona Game and Fish Commission consulted Dr. Beier? If not, why?

Dr. Beier has conducted research in the past into mountain lion behavior in close proximity to urban areas. Although this study was significant, it was conducted more than ten years ago, and since that time, Dr. Beier has not published any additional mountain lion research. During the Sabino Canyon mountain lion incident the Arizona Game and Fish Department did consult with Dr. Beier. Lion attacks have become more frequent since Dr. Beier published his works. We also consulted with Dr. E. Lee Fitzhugh who has continued to study mountain lion/human interactions in the interim.

22. How many mountain lions are left in this state? Are they becoming endangered? Does the Game and Fish Commission know the locations of these other cats? If so, why not release these lions into other parts of the state?

Arizona Game and Fish biologists and researchers are working to obtain more detailed information on many wildlife species, including predators such as lions. Current information indicates that mountain lions occupy about 62,000 square miles of habitat across the state with a population of more than 2,500. They are not endangered.

Relocating mountain lions to other areas of the wild is not an option. It would be irresponsible to move a public safety liability to a new location. Also, mountain lions are extremely territorial. Relocating one could result in one or both mountain lions being killed or injured. Such action could also result in a mountain lion being displaced, putting it into conflict with a cougar in another territory or even ending up in an area occupied by people.

23. Has the Game and Fish Commission considered closing the area until this perceived threat has passed?

The U.S. Forest Service manages Sabino Canyon. The Game and Fish Commission cannot order it closed. However, since the first documented sightings in mid-May 2003, department officers have worked with the U.S. Forest Service and Pima County authorities to educate visitors and residents near the canyon about the potential threat from mountain lions and how that threat can be reduced. In March 2004, the U.S. Forest Service closed the canyon due to abnormal mountain lion behavior and related public safety issues. Only the U.S. Forest Service could determine whether to permanently close the canyon. It is the opinion of the Arizona Game and Fish Department that unless habituated mountain lions are removed from the canyon, they will continue to pose a threat to human beings.

24. Since the majority of visitors to Sabino Canyon use the tram, has the Game and Fish Commission closure to the canyon to hikers, etc.?

This is a U.S. Forest Service issue. Again, the Forest Service manages Sabino Canyon and is responsible for such decisions.

25. Where are the lions being taken after removal from Sabino Canyon? Why the secrecy regarding the name of the rehabilitation center?

Once a suitable such facility was located and had agreed to take the cougars, its name, director and location were announced. The Southwest Wildlife Rehabilitation and Educational Foundation in Scottsdale agreed to take responsibility for and provide care to the Sabino Canyon mountain lions.

26. How do national parks like Yellowstone and Yosemite cope with dangerous animals like bear, elk, moose and wolves with the large numbers of tourists that visit them every year?

They are handled on a case-by-case basis. For example, Yosemite National Park wildlife biologists euthanized two mountain lions in October 2003, after they displayed threatening behavior and were routinely sighted by visitors and employees in the developed part of Yosemite Valley. Park management decided to take action to ensure visitor safety in Yosemite Valley. It is not uncommon for wildlife management agencies to take such action when public safety is a concern. If a threat is deemed serious enough, lethal removal of the animal is often the result.

27. If a child is mauled in Sabino Canyon, who will be held answerable?

This would have to be determined in a court of law. However, currently in Arizona there is no immunity statute removing the state, or its agencies, from liability for accidents involving wild animals.

28. Why not have people sign liability waivers, when they enter the park?

This is a U.S. Forest Service question since it manages Sabino Canyon.

29. Why can't the lions be left alone and the public be educated about the dangers?

The department's chief concern is public safety, and our goal was to get the threatening lions out of the area as quickly as possible. Since the first documented sightings in mid-May 2003, department officers worked with the U.S. Forest Service and Pima County authorities to educate visitors and residents near the canyon about the potential threat from mountain lions and how it could be reduced. Signs in the recreation area warned hikers of the presence of lions and educational efforts focused on wildlife feeding were targeted toward residents.

30. Where can I send a donation to help pay for the removal of the lions?

The Wildlife for Tomorrow Foundation accepted donations to help remove the mountain lions from Sabino Canyon. Donations were sent to:
Wildlife for Tomorrow Foundation
2221 W. Greenway Rd.
Phoenix, AZ 85023

31. Is there a way the canyon could be closed to hikers, mountain bikers and joggers during the dawn and dusk hours so that lions could go on making their living?

This is a U.S. Forest Service question.

32. Please provide specific facts and scientific studies or other support for why you believe there is threat to human safety.

In a detailed action plan approved by the Arizona Game and Fish Department in 2002 for managing interaction between mountain lions and humans, the department's system of identifying and categorizing issues with mountain lions was established. Reports are broken into four categories:

Sighting: a visual observation of a lion or a report of lion tracks or other sign.

Encounter: an unexpected direct, neutral meeting between a human and a lion without incident.

Incident: an interaction between a human and a lion in which the human must take an action to make the lion back down, or the lion exhibits aggressive or abnormal behavior such as daylight activity, unusual interest in humans or failure to yield.

Attack: when a human is chased, suffers bodily injury or is killed by a mountain lion.

Department responses are based on the number of reports, severity and other factors that might have contributed to the interaction. The department's policy is to direct all efforts at the individual lion deemed to be dangerous or a potential threat to public safety. Mountain lions will be destroyed "if they attack a human or when they are judged to be a substantial threat to public safety." In the case of the lions in Sabino Canyon, information collected by field staff indicated that at least two and as many as four cougars had demonstrated abnormal behavior and posed a serious threat to public safety.

33. The question has been raised about the accountability of the Commission and its actions to the public. Since you are a 90/10 Board, the State Legislature doesn't have much budgetary constraints. You have a reputation as a rogue agency with no public or government oversight. In the absence of legislative initiatives, what do you plan to do to restore your credibility with the voters of Arizona or do you encourage a legislative solution?

We believe we have excellent credibility. We are a member of the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies and the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies. Our biologists have exceptional credentials, are widely published in respected journals and participate in national and international activities related to wildlife management. This includes participation in CITES (the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) which is an international agreement between governments. Its aim is to ensure that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten their survival. The Arizona Game and Fish Department is not a 90/10 Board.

Under current law, the director of the Game and Fish Department is chosen by a 5-member Game and Fish Commission, whose members are appointed by the governor and approved by the Senate. According to statute, the person chosen must pass a test, must have administrative ability and a general knowledge of wildlife management. The law does not require that the Game and Fish director's views be compatible with those of the governor. This is as it should be. Otherwise, the actions of the department would become subject to the political philosophy of whoever happens to be governor. Policies and actions of the Game and Fish Department should be based on solid experience and specialized knowledge of wildlife biology and animal behavior. Such policies should not be subject to the whims of environmental or anti-environmental politicians.

All Game and Fish Commission meetings are conducted in accordance with Arizona's open meeting laws where the public is welcomed and urged to participate. In addition, numerous public meetings are held throughout the year in many locations to address department and commission rules, policies, and planning efforts.

34. Do you have examples where wild adult cougars were successfully moved into captivity and lived out a long, healthy life?

Our information suggests wild adult cougars do not do well in captivity.

35. Isn't it true that AGFD and U SFS have not tried other non-lethal methods, including hazing cougars, restricting Sabino Canyon hiking to the road, requiring hiking in pairs, keeping the canyon closed for a while, or closing potentially high-risk areas of Sabino Canyon?

Mountain lion experts examined a list of possible actions to address the problem lions in the canyon. Unfortunately, strategies that are appropriate with other wildlife, such as relocation or human reconditioning, have not proven to be successful with mountain lions. Research indicates that adult mountain lions do not thrive in captivity, and there are few opportunities for rehabilitation placements. In this case, a suitable rehabilitation facility was identified (as stated above) with the assistance of animal protection organizations in Arizona.

Nonetheless, the plan to locate, tranquilize and relocate out of the canyon was a difficult, costly and dangerous operation for both the lions and department staff. Because of the opportunity to place these lions in a rehabilitation center, however, department staff and the Arizona Game and Fish Commission supported efforts to relocate the lions.

Any decision to alter the rules or regulations in Sabino Canyon would be up to the U.S. Forest Service. It is responsible for Sabino Canyon including hiking rules, canyon closures, and other regulations.

36. Isn't it true that AGFD and USFS six earlier efforts to track and shoot lions while Sabino Canyon was open put the public in danger?

The department has actively tried to track the Sabino Canyon lions since May 2003. Lions are difficult to track, and the number of visitors to Sabino Canyon severely complicated efforts to locate them. Escalating sightings and reports of abnormal behavior prompted the U.S. Forest Service to close the canyon, in order to make tracking easier for the department.

The department had tried six previous times since July 2003 to remove offending lions when incidents of aberrant behavior could be verified. There were two main factors that contributed to our not locating the cougars. They are: the rough nature of the terrain, and the fact that the canyon was open to the public, which limited our ability to find the cougars.

37. Specifically, what evidence do you need to see to decide if a reported lion sighting is credible? If it is judged a credible sighting, how do you decide if there was ever a threat to people?

In order to decide whether a sighting is credible, Arizona Game and Fish Department wildlife managers report to the location of a sighting. They evaluate any photographic evidence or tracks available. They obtain a reliable description of the animal. They also try to determine whether there's a public safety threat, in part, by questioning the reporting party about the behavior of the animal when it was in proximity to humans.

38. Isn't it true that conservation groups have been asking for the best evidence you have on why AGFD considered the cougars in the canyon an imminent threat to people, and AGFD has still not provided any documentation to the public of any evidence to back up its allegations?

The Arizona Game and Fish Department has released a list of credible mountain lion sightings in the Sabino Canyon area. The list was provided to the governor's staff and includes more than 40 sightings since July.

The department has also provided a letter from Professor E. Lee Fitzhugh, one of the nation's most respected experts on mountain lion-human interactions. The letter supports the research, expertise, and actions of the Arizona Game and Fish Department in the Sabino Canyon area. This information can be found on the department's Web site.

39. Isn't it true that AGFD and USFS compiled a list of reported cougar sightings in and around Sabino Canyon and that report showed only one definitely confirmed cougar sighting around Sabino Canyon since 2002 and contained no confirmed evidence of recent stalking behavior?

The Arizona Game and Fish Department did compile a list of mountain lion sightings in and around Sabino Canyon. However, more than one sighting has been confirmed. One sighting occurred just last month on the grounds of a middle school during daylight hours, when mountain lions are not usually active. Department officials have also noted reports of the disappearance of pets and mountain lions approaching and growling at people in the area, signs that may indicate cougars are becoming so used to people that an attack may soon occur.

40. Isn't it understandable that with 2,000 people a day (1.5 million per year) hiking in Sabino Canyon that cougars will be seen, and simply having cougars in the area does not constitute a threat to people?

This case does not involve "simply having cougars in the area." As noted above, people in the Sabino Canyon area have reported mountain lions roaming on the grounds of a school, approaching people without fear, remaining active during daylight hours, and exhibiting other aggressive behaviors. These behaviors indicate a potential threat to people.

41. Isn't it true that the government just settled a lawsuit with conservation groups involving cougar killing on the Tonto National Forest where cougars were killed without solid evidence, first trying other options, or addressing other causes of conflict?

The government did recently settle a lawsuit with an animal rights organization. This lawsuit involved the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and an Arizona Game and Fish Department study of how the bighorn sheep population was affected by the removal of mountain lions. The settlement, however, had to do with overflights of the Tonto National Forest Wilderness Area and other technicalities not directly related to the lion removal portion of the study. Further, there was solid evidence that mountain lions had killed approximately 2/3 of the radiomarked bighorn in the area. Also, the Department evaluated a wide range of alternatives as part of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) scoping that was completed prior to the initiation of the project. The experimental design underwent considerable peer-review from doctorate-credentialed wildlife biologists associated with universities and from private industry. As a last note, the settlement agreement had no impact to the study, but asked only for procedural changes if any future similar study were to be initiated.

42. What consideration have you given to the overall ecological balance as a result of removing a number of pumas?

If a number of lions are moved, mountain lions from adjacent areas quickly reoccupy the area, thus maintaining the function of a large carnivore in the system.

43. Have you consulting with outside experts to determine non-lethal means of dealing with the problem?

The department looked at how other organizations have dealt with similar situations. In particular, numerous phone calls were made to other wildlife professionals, especially in other western states.

44. In the federal experimental program to kill pumas to ostensibly increase bighorn sheep population, who were the actual hunters? Professional or sport?

The program likely being referred to here was federally funded, but carried out by the Arizona Game and Fish Department. The research was used to evaluate the effects of mountain lion removal on the bighorn

sheep population. This was not limited to predator activity, but also included habitat conditions and occurrence of disease within the sheep population. Sport hunters were used.

45. Upon what criteria do you base your decision to “remove” (kill) predators? What is the source of such criteria?

First and foremost, the Arizona Game and Fish Department is concerned with public safety. The criteria for a decision comes from a combination of the experience of wildlife managers, overall departmental experience, reviews of literature regarding similar incidents, and a variety of other considerations.

46. What do you consider aberrant behavior sufficient to require “removal”? How many incidents must occur in order to trigger the decision to “remove”? What have you done to determine if any of the targeted pumas are with cubs?

A decision to remove a mountain lion is made when a cougar is acting in a manner that is interpreted by the department as a threat to public safety. There is no set number of incidents required, in order to trigger this decision. For example, if a mountain lion mauled a child, the department would act after that one incident. In other cases, including in Sabino Canyon, multiple sightings and incidents may be involved.

In order to determine whether any of the mountain lions had cubs, the department would have to locate the cougars and find out whether they are lactating. Locating tracks would be another option.

47. Were any nongame staff consulted to provide input on non-lethal measures?

All relevant Arizona Game and Fish Department personnel were consulted.

48. To what extent has the Game and Fish Commission encouraged public participation and input?

The Arizona Game and Fish Commission took extensive public comment on the Sabino Canyon issue at its March meeting in Tucson. The commission also held a public meeting in Phoenix. A Game and Fish Commissioner and other representatives participated in a forum with legislators and the public in Tucson. Public input is part of the reason that the department decided to relocate the mountain lions.

49. What weight does the Commission give to the public input in reaching its decision to “remove”?

Public input was one of the determining factors involved in the Arizona Game and Fish Department deciding to relocate the mountain lions.

50. What scientific or biological studies does the Commission rely upon to support its decision?

Numerous recent scientific publications address the subject of mountain lion-human interaction and warning signs that attacks may occur. In particular, work by Professor E. Lee Fitzhugh and information from various lion experts in numerous states were examined. Also, Arizona Game and Fish personnel weighed in with their experience and professional knowledge.

51. What professional training do the individual Commission members have to qualify them to make such decisions?

The Arizona Game and Fish Commission members are appointed by the Governor, in part because of their interest in important issues such as this. They base their decisions on sound scientific information and the expertise of Arizona Game and Fish Department staff members with decades of experience.

52. What professional studies did the Commission consider in reaching its conclusion that “removal” is the only alternative?

The department considered all feasible alternatives in dealing with the Sabino Canyon mountain lions. Numerous recent scientific publications address the subject of mountain lion-human interaction. In particular, work by Professor E. Lee Fitzhugh and information from various lion experts in numerous states were examined. Also, Arizona Game and Fish personnel weighed in with their experience and professional knowledge.

53. What is the total number of verified sightings of pumas in the U.S. for the past 10 years?

The Arizona Game and Fish Department does not monitor mountain lion sightings outside of this state.

54. What is the total number of persons entering known puma habitats throughout the U.S. on a daily basis? On an annual basis?

The Arizona Game and Fish Department does not monitor human traffic in puma habitats outside this state.

55. From what source does Game and Fish receive most of its revenue? Does this revenue go to the general fund, or is it exclusively controlled by Game and Fish?

The Arizona Game and Fish Department derives its revenue from the sales of hunting and fishing licenses, from a federal excise tax on the sale of fishing equipment, firearms and ammunition, from the Heritage Fund through the Arizona Lottery, and other sources. A bi-annual budget is prepared that must be approved by both the governor and the state legislature.

56. Does the fact that Game and Fish’s overall mission is to provide opportunities for the hunting of animals influence the decision on how the removal of troublesome animals is?

The Arizona Game and Fish Department’s mission is to conserve, enhance, and restore Arizona’s diverse wildlife resources and habitats through aggressive protection and management programs, and to provide wildlife resources and safe watercraft recreation for the enjoyment, appreciation, and use of present and future generations. To say that the department’s mission is to provide opportunities for hunting ignores that fact that the agency actively manages all of the state’s wildlife resources including sensitive species that are threatened with extinction. Recovery examples include Apache and Gila trout, black-footed ferrets, California condors, and Mexican gray wolves.

57. Do the number of pumas have any adverse affect upon the numbers of big game animals available for “harvesting”?

In instances where big game populations face numerous challenges, including drought, habitat deterioration, and poor production, predators can have a greater influence on big game population recovery.

