

HOUSE JOINT MEMORIAL 58

44TH LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - SECOND SESSION, 2000

INTRODUCED BY

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A JOINT MEMORIAL

REQUESTING THE STATE GAME COMMISSION AND THE DEPARTMENT OF
GAME AND FISH REFRAIN FROM INDISCRIMINATELY KILLING COUGARS.

WHEREAS, desert bighorn sheep are a state-listed
endangered species; and

WHEREAS, the continued survival of desert bighorn sheep
depends on several factors, including escape terrain, water
supplies, forage, open habitat without vision-obstructing
vegetation and limited harassment from human activity such as
mines, recreational users, housing, domestic dogs, roads,
fences and aircraft; and

WHEREAS, many of the areas currently occupied by desert
bighorn sheep suffer from habitat degradation; and

WHEREAS, the department of game and fish publication
Evaluation of Desert Bighorn Sheep Habitat in New Mexico
states that escape terrain and suitable habitat are limited
in areas, especially the Ladron mountains, in which

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1 indiscriminate cougar killing is planned in order to
2 ostensibly protect desert bighorn sheep; and

3 WHEREAS, previous attempts to increase the population of
4 desert bighorn sheep through indiscriminate cougar killing
5 have proven to be ineffective, for example in the San Andres,
6 Peloncillo and Little and Big Hatchet mountains; and

7 WHEREAS, the department has not scientifically evaluated
8 the effectiveness of its recent program of killing only
9 offending cougars to limit desert bighorn sheep mortality;
10 and

11 WHEREAS, the department has not yet published a
12 scientific, peer-reviewed study designed for evaluating the
13 effectiveness of indiscriminately killing cougars in order to
14 ostensibly protect desert bighorn sheep; and

15 WHEREAS, the department has no plans to use the
16 flexibility built into its cougar management plan to mitigate
17 any negative impacts from additional cougar killing; and

18 WHEREAS, the department has not considered the high
19 likelihood that vacancies created by indiscriminate cougar
20 killing would be quickly filled by other transient cougars,
21 thereby rendering its cougar-killing efforts ineffective at
22 protecting desert bighorn sheep; and

23 WHEREAS, the department should pursue a more
24 comprehensive desert bighorn recovery effort, as outlined in
25 the report of the conservation breeding specialist group
meeting held in Santa Fe in July 1999;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE

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1 STATE OF NEW MEXICO that the state game commission and the
2 department of game and fish be requested to refrain from
3 indiscriminate cougar killing with respect to desert bighorn
4 sheep recovery and instead implement sound scientific
5 approaches to desert bighorn sheep recovery, including
6 proactive measures to enhance desert bighorn sheep habitat,
7 thereby reducing the vulnerability of desert bighorn
8 populations to cougar predation; and

9 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be
10 transmitted to the state game commission and the director of
11 the department of game and fish.