NEBRASKA GAME PARKS

Mountain Lion Recommendations

August 2025

Mountain Lion Recommendations for 2026

Changes for the 2026 Season

- The harvest limit in the Niobrara Unit has increased from four with a sublimit of two females in 2025, to six with a sublimit of three females for 2026.

Recolonization

Mountain lions (*Puma concolor*) are native to Nebraska but were extirpated by the early 1900s due to unregulated hunting, trapping, poisoning, and decimation of prey species. Prey populations recovered throughout the 20th century due to protection offered by game laws. Mountain lion populations recovered throughout the Mountain West over this period due to the elimination of bounties and management of mountain lions and their prey as big game species. These two factors allowed mountain lion populations to expand to the east and recolonize parts of South Dakota, North Dakota, and Nebraska.

Legal Status

Mountain lions were not a protected species in Nebraska when the first modern confirmations were made in 1991. In 1995, the Nebraska Legislature added mountain lions to the statutory list of game animals, thereby affording protection under the Game Law. In 2010, statute explicitly stated how and when a person could kill a mountain lion in defense of people or livestock. In 2012, statute provided authority for the Commission to issue permits and create regulations for mountain lion harvest seasons. The Commission approved regulations for a mountain lion harvest season during 2014, and held regulated mountain lion harvest seasons every year from 2019 forward.

Distribution

In Nebraska, mountain lion populations with resident females, males, and multiple instances of reproduction have been documented in three areas: the Pine Ridge, Niobrara River Valley, and Wildcat Hills (Figure 1). In addition, one instance of reproduction was documented in the northeast Missouri river bluffs during 2021. Mountain lions in Nebraska are part of a larger regional population where animals are continually mixing. Mountain lion populations in Nebraska are not genetically isolated; they are connected to populations in South Dakota, Wyoming, and Colorado through immigration and emigration of individuals. The Commission is committed to maintaining

a geographically comprehensive approach for mountain lion management. Commission staff work closely with biologists from South Dakota, Colorado, and Wyoming, to share information regarding mountain lion management and research. Since mountain lions interact and move between states, it is important that management decisions fit within a regional context.

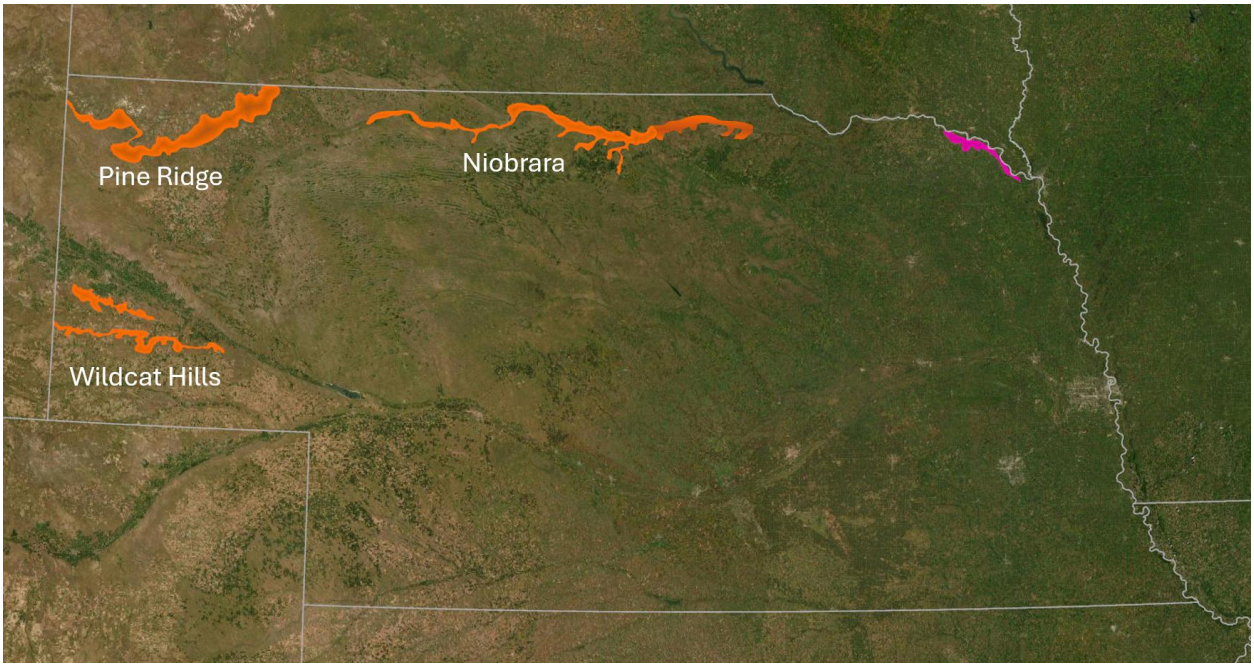

Figure 1. Three areas of suitable habitat in Nebraska with documented resident mountain lion populations (orange). One instance of reproduction was documented in the northeast Missouri River bluffs (pink).

Suitable Habitat

The Commission created a map of suitable habitat in 2010 (Figure 2) based on a GIS model developed by the North Dakota Game and Fish Department (North Dakota Game and Fish Department 2006). The model identifies areas of suitable mountain lion habitat using three primary landscape criteria: concealment and stalking cover (woody cover/forest/shrubs), topographic concealment and stalking cover (steep terrain/slopes), and proximity to water. Areas that are steep, forested, and have available water are considered most suitable. The model identified ~96% of Nebraska as unsuitable habitat for mountain lions and ~4% as suitable. The model identified the Pine Ridge as the largest non-riparian block of suitable habitat in the state. Riparian forests in many river valleys were identified as suitable habitat by the model, but it is unclear if these thin linear strips will be occupied by mountain lions over time.

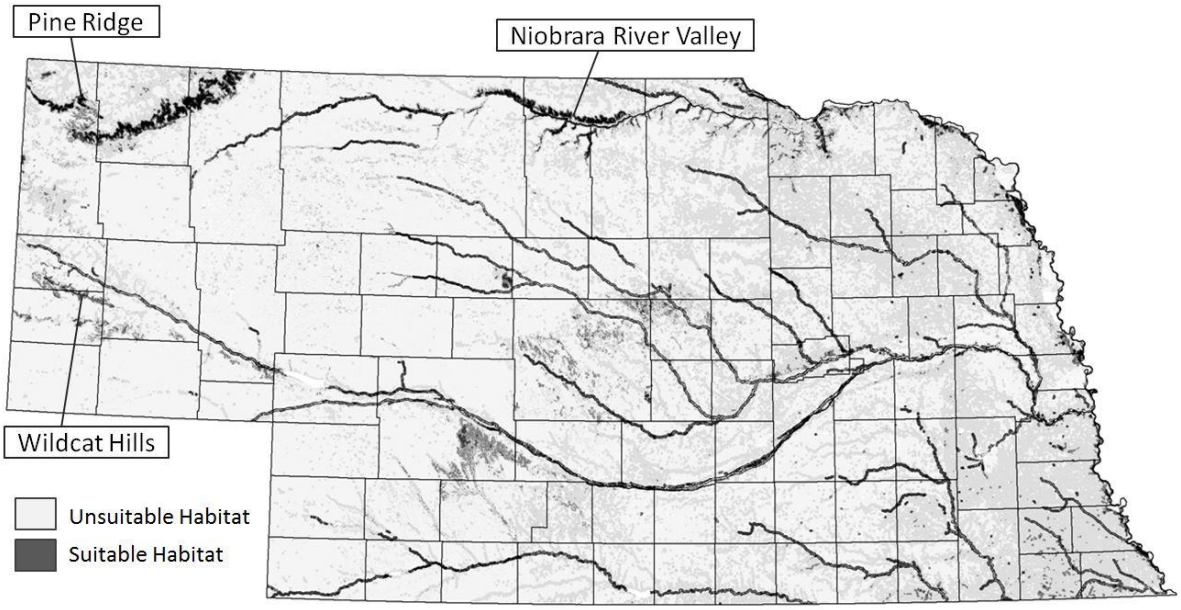

Figure 2. 2010 estimate of suitable (dark gray) and unsuitable (light gray) habitat for mountain lions in Nebraska.

Population Estimates

The Commission has not created an estimate of the total number of mountain lions in Nebraska. Genetic surveys utilizing scat detector dogs, and subsequent genetic analyses of the samples collected, have been completed periodically (2010, 2012, 2014, 2015, 2017, 2019, 2021, 2023, and 2024) in areas that have resident populations. Non-invasive genetic surveys, such as scat surveys, have proven to be an efficient and cost-effective method for surveying elusive carnivores including mountain lions. The CAPWIRE package in Program R (Miller et al. 2005; Pennell et al. 2013) is used to estimate the size of the lion populations. This model was specifically developed for estimating small populations of elusive species utilizing information gathered through collection of genetic samples (e.g., scat, hair, urine, and blood).

The Lincoln-Petersen mark-recapture method with the Chapman modification for small sample size is also used to estimate mountain lion populations in Nebraska. Study animals from GPS collaring research efforts that were known to be in the area during the time of the survey are considered marked. Marked individuals detected by genetic samples (scats) during the surveys are considered recaptured. This technique has been utilized whenever possible since 2017 when the sample size for the GPS collaring project first provided enough information to allow for its use in the Pine Ridge.

Population estimates created using these techniques estimate the total number of mountain lions in the area including adults, subadults, and kittens. One instance of reproduction was documented in northeast Nebraska (Figure 1) but is not considered an established population since additional resident females and instances of reproduction have not been confirmed. A few additional dispersing animals typically wander elsewhere in the state at any given point in time, but their numbers are exceedingly difficult to estimate.

Pine Ridge

Genetic surveys have been completed periodically in the Pine Ridge (2010, 2012, 2014, 2015, 2017, 2019, 2021, and 2023), and are presently underway during 2025. For the 2017, 2019, 2021, and 2023 surveys, the Pine Ridge population was also estimated using the mark-recapture method. Both methods estimated the Pine Ridge population at 59 total animals (adults, subadults and kittens) in 2017. Estimates from the 2019 survey were 29 for the mark-recapture method and 39 for the Capwire method. The midpoint of 34 was used for the 2019 point-estimate. Estimates from the 2021 survey were 33 for the mark-recapture method and 27 for the Capwire method. The mark-recapture estimate of 33 was considered the most reasonable point estimate to use when taking the tighter confidence intervals and GPS collar information into account. The Capwire estimate did not produce reliable results from the 2023 survey data, the mark-recapture estimate for 2023 was 70 total animals (Figure 3), including adults, sub-adults, and kittens.

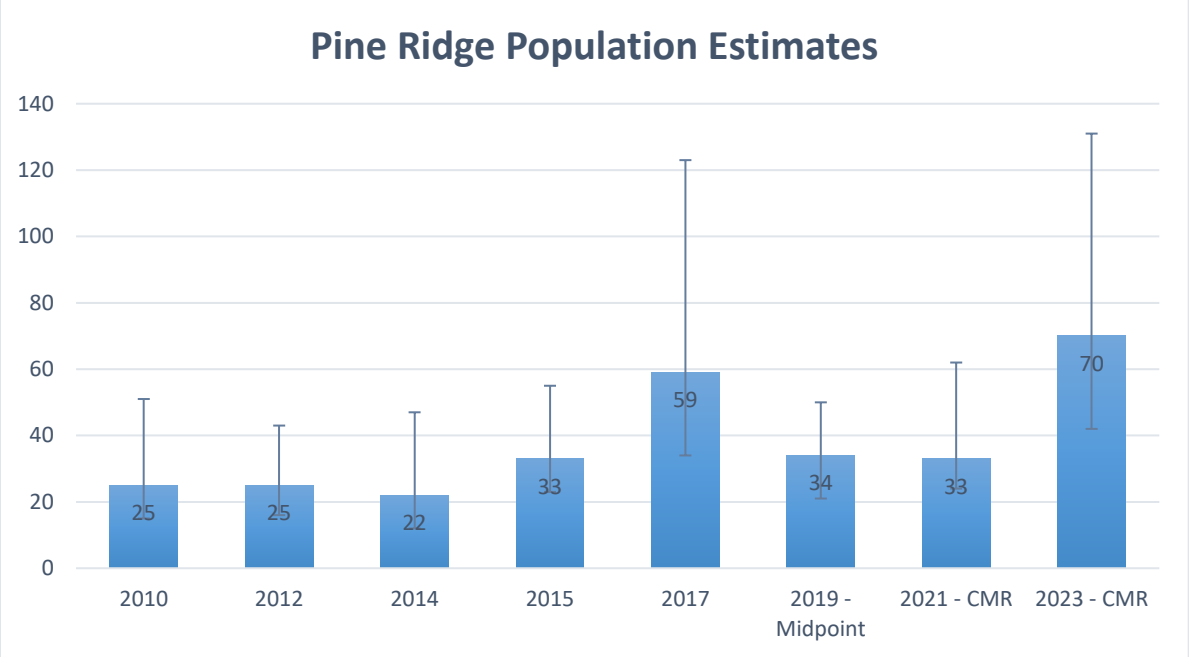

Figure 3. Population estimates for the mountain lion population in the Nebraska Pine Ridge, 2010-2023 (May and June).

Niobrara

The Niobrara Valley contains high quality mountain lion habitat (Figure 2) and abundant prey resources (white-tailed and mule deer, coyotes, elk, raccoons, porcupines, turkeys, etc.). Mountain lions have recolonized suitable habitat in the Niobrara Valley over the past two decades. Since the first confirmed presence documented by long-time Commission employee Dick Turpin in 2001, mountian lion presence has increased and eventually resulted in a resident established population. This population likely formed in the early 2010s with genetic evidence of resident reproduction by 2013.

The Niobrara Valley was closed to mountain lion harvest as the population formed and became established. This population appears to have grown quickly in recent years with resident females expanding into most available suitable habitat. Genetic surveys utilizing scat detector dogs were conducted in the Niobrara Valley during 2012, 2014, and 2024. Results of the these surveys were not sufficient to produce a population estimate; however, they did result in the confirmation of multiple females and provided the first evidence that this was a resident reproducing population. Results from the 2024 surveys provide additional information on present population size and resiliency through the documentation of six females.

Resident reproduction has now been documented over more than 100 miles of river valley and adjacent stream canyons. Thirty-four total individuals were detected during 2024 through all available methods (captures, known mortalities, genetic samples, unique photos, etc.), including five known instances of reproduction (7 in 2023). Twenty-seven individuals were detected in 2023.

The Niobrara Valley has proven to be connected to western mountain lion populations including several instances of marked (collared or ear-tagged) animals immigrating from the Pine Ridge or Wildcat Hils populations. Known mortalities in the Niobrara River Valley have been low with an average of two per year during 2021-2023. There were five mortalities in the Niobrara Valley during 2024 (1 harvested), and six so far during 2025 (3 harvested). Documented connectivity to nearby populations, relatively low known mortalities, demographics of known individuals, area of occupied habitat, and instances of known reproduction indicate this population is likely stable or increasing and would be resilient to harvest.

Wildcat Hills

The Wildcat Hills contain high quality mountain lion habitat (Figure 2) and diverse prey resources (white-tailed and mule deer, coyotes, elk, bighorn sheep, raccoons, porcupines, turkeys, etc.).

Mountain lions have recolonized suitable habitat here over the past two decades. Since the first modern confirmation in 1996, mountian lion presence has increased and eventually resulted in an established resident population. This population likely formed in the early 2010s with evidence of reproduction by 2013. This population appears to have grown quickly in recent years with resident females expanding into most available suitable habitat. Genetic surveys utilizing scat detector dogs were conducted in the Wildcat Hills during 2015 and 2024. Results from the 2015 survey were not sufficient to produce a population estimate. Genetic surveys conducted during May and June 2024 identified eight females and four males in the Wildcat Hills. Age of the animal cannot be determined from genetic samples, so these may be kittens or adults. Results from the 2024 survey allowed a mark-recapture population estimate of 34 total animals; however, this estimate is likely biased and may not be a reliable point estimate. Another mark-recapture estimate was created using known/collared animals present during the January 2025 harvest season, with harvested animals representing the recaptures. This estimate was 18 total animals during January 2025 — the estimate is also likely biased but with improved confidence intervals. (Figure 4).

Twenty six total individuals were detected during 2024 (24 in 2023). Seventy-three percent of those detected are presently known dead or have dispersed. Known mortalities have been very high with nine known mortalties in 2024, and 12 known mortalities so far during 2025 (Figure 4). Four known instances of reproduction were documented (down from 7 in 2023) with two of those females and their kittens known dead. The Wildcat Hills population is likely significantly reduced compared to early 2024. Abundance during 2024 was significantly above staff targets and likley represented a short-term overshoot of available habitat, prey, and tolerance of many local landowners. The high levels of known mortalities documented during 2024 and 2025 likely significantly reduced the population, bringing it closer to the lower level of staff goals for the unit.

The Commission presently has evidence of two adult reproducing females in the Wildcat Hills — a collared female (with two female kittens) and an unmarked female (with two kittens) photographed in March 2025. A subadult female is also collared in this area. These animals and any of the seven females identified during the 2024 survey that may remain in the area (1 is known dead), and kittens born to other unmarked females (if any), may help provide resilience for the population to harvest. Immigration from populations in Wyoming, Colorado, South Dakota, and Nebraska may also help fill portions of the population depleted by harvest and high mortality levels during 2024, and so far in 2025. The population was above Commission targets during 2024, and after an unusual number of known mortalities is now likely at the low end or below staff targets. A harvest limit of three total with a sublimit of two females would likely reduce the present population.

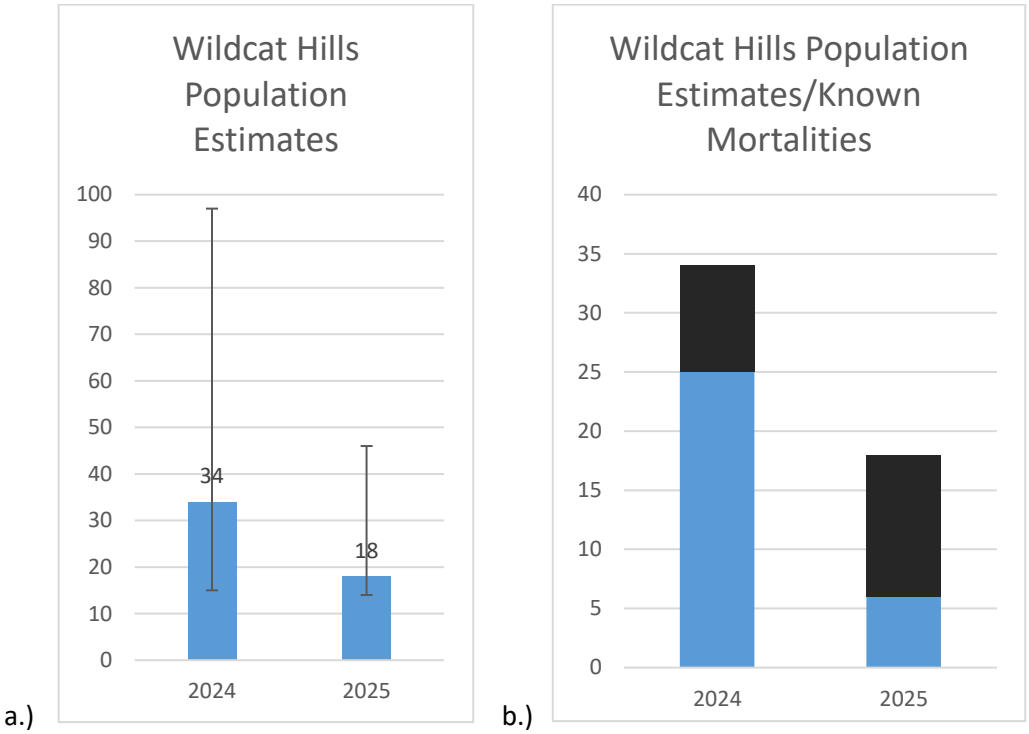

Figure 4. Population estimates created using the mark-recapture technique for the mountain lion population in the Wildcat Hills, May and June 2024, and January 2025 (a). Population estimates with the portion of known mortalities during 2024, and during January through March 2025, shown in black (b).

Survey of Nebraska Landowner Attitudes on Mountain Lions

The management goal identified in the Nebraska Mountain Lion Management Plan is to maintain resilient, healthy, and socially acceptable mountain lion populations that are in balance with available habitat and other wildlife species over the long term. The first large-scale survey of landowner attitudes toward mountain lions was conducted to better understand social tolerance in the management units. The survey was conducted by the Human Dimensions Lab in the University of Nebraska-Lincoln School of Natural Resources and the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission. Surveys were mailed during February and March 2025 to landowners who owned property in suitable mountain lion habitat in at least one of the three Nebraska Mountain Lion Management Units. The majority of landowners surveyed owned more than 1,000 acres. 453 surveys were mailed, and responses were received from 175 landowners (39% response rate). The survey report is not finalized; however, initial results do provide important information regarding landowner tolerance within mountain lion units.

The social tolerance component of the Commissions management goal is difficult to assess as individuals' tolerance varies dramatically. This survey is instrumental in determining overall

tolerance among landowners in mountain lion management units. The survey does not assess tolerance or attitudes of the overall population within the units, as people who do not own rural properties where mountain lions are likely present were not surveyed.

Responses to the following questions provide an indication of relative tolerance for mountain lions in the three units:

1) The percentage of landowners that responded that they feel there have been too many mountain lions on their land over the last 24 months:

   Pine Ridge: 66%
   Niobrara: 64%
   Wildcat Hills: 38%

2) The percentage of landowners that responded that they have a very negative or somewhat negative general attitude towards mountain lions:

   Pine Ridge: 64%
   Niobrara: 63%
   Wildcat Hills: 45%

Landowners in the Wildcat Hills unit appear to have a higher relative tolerance to mountain lions than landowners in the Pine Ridge and Niobrara units. This initial survey provides baseline information regarding landowner attitudes toward mountain lions. The survey will be repeated every five years to allow for assessment of trends and assessment of Commission efforts to assist landowners with any issues mountain lions may cause over time.

Regulated Harvest

When the Nebraska Legislature classified the mountain lion as a game animal in 1995, it signaled to the Commission that hunting of the species could be allowed if the population was large enough to sustain a harvest. This is the same criteria used for any other species on the state's game animal list, from deer to bobcats to pheasants. State statute also identifies the Commission as the appropriate agency to set hunting seasons. Nebraska State Constitution Article XV-25 states that public hunting shall be a preferred means of managing and controlling wildlife. The management goal identified in the Nebraska Mountain Lion Management Plan is to maintain resilient, healthy, and socially acceptable mountain lion populations that are in balance with available habitat and other wildlife species over the long term.

The first regulated harvest season for mountain lions in Nebraska was held in 2014. Five mountain lions were harvested during the inaugural season: three males and two females. No harvest season was held during 2015–2018, in part due to an unusual number of non-hunting mortalities that occurred during 2014. Five mountain lions were harvested during the 2019 season: three males and two females. Seven mountain lions were harvested during the 2020 season: five males and two females. Four mountain lions were harvested during the 2021 season: three males and one female. Four mountain lions were harvested during the 2022 season: three males and one female. Two mountain lions were harvested during the 2023 season; both were females. Four mountain lions were harvested during the 2024 season; three in the Pine Ridge (2 females, 1 male), and one female was harvested in the first regulated harvest season held in the Niobrara River Valley. Thirteen mountain lions were harvested during the 2025 season; seven in the Pine Ridge (6 females, 1 male), three mountain lions (2 female, 1 male) were harvested in the Niobrara River Valley, and three mountain lions (1 female, 2 males) were harvested during the inaugural season in the Wildcat Hills.

Proposed 2026 Mountain Lion Harvest

Pine Ridge

The most recent population estimate (2023) for the Pine Ridge population is 70 total mountain lions, including adults, subadults, and kittens. This estimate is much higher than the 2021 estimate of 33. This estimate is above staff goals to hold the mountain lion population at densities of 4-7/100km^2.

Input collected during public meetings held in the Pine Ridge in 2017 and 2018, indicated that the population/density level at that time (59 animals and ~8.8 mountain lions/100km^2 of suitable habitat) was above what many landowners were willing to accept. In addition, local hunters and landowners were concerned that deer populations were recovering more slowly, or in some locales declining, due to predation by mountain lions. Input provided at the Big Game meetings in 2024 and 2025 reiterated a generally low tolerance for mountain lions in the Pine Ridge.

The estimated population size and documented connectivity to the larger Black Hills population are consistent with a population that is resilient to harvest. There are presently three females with working collars in the Pine Ridge, and documentation of additional females and kittens, which provides confidence that the population remains resilient to harvest. Staff recommend that a harvest season for mountain lions be held in the Pine Ridge during 2026.

Niobrara

Information for the mountain lion population in the Niobrara Valley is consistent with a population that is expanding in distribution and abundance. The population is connected to western populations in Nebraska, and beyond, through dispersal and immigration. Thirty-four total individuals were detected during 2024 (27 in 2023), with five known instances of reproduction (7 in 2023). There are two females with working collars in this area.

Input from Big Game meetings held in the Niobrara Unit provided a high level of support for regulated hunting. Public tolerance for mountain lions has been relatively high as the population increased; however, locals have expressed concern over potential impacts to deer and elk populations as well as concern over livestock depredation. Staff believe the harvest season in the Niobrara Valley benefits acceptance of mountain lions in this area over the long-term. This population is resilient to harvest, and staff recommend that a harvest season be held for mountain lions in the Niobrara Valley during 2026.

Wildcat Hills

Information for the mountain lion population in the Wildcat Hills is consistent with a population that had been expanding in distribution and abundance until 2024; however, mortalities documented during 2024 and so far in 2025 have likely reduced abundance in this area. The population was likely much higher than staff goals for this unit during 2024. This population is connected to western populations in Nebraska, Wyoming, and Colorado, through dispersal and immigration though likely at a lesser rate than a population like the Pine Ridge that is much closer to a large source population in the Black Hills of South Dakota and Wyoming. Twenty-six mountain lions were documented in the Wildcat Hills during 2024 and four instances of reproduction.

Input from Big Game meetings held in this area provide support for regulated hunting. Public tolerance for mountain lions has been relatively high as indicated in the 2025 landowner survey; however, local residents have expressed growing concern over impacts on bighorn sheep, deer, and elk populations as well as concern over potential livestock depredation. Three landowners from this area provided input at the June 2025 Commission meeting in Sidney that they would like fewer mountain lions on their properties. The present harvest limit as amended by the Commission at the June 2025 Commission meeting may or may not allow for a resilient population depending on the demographics of the animals harvested. Future harvest seasons could be

halted or reduced if the population no longer has evidence of reproduction or cannot sustain a harvest and remain resilient.

Pine Ridge Harvest Objective: To provide a harvest opportunity for mountain lions that will allow the population to remain resilient and healthy, while reducing the population size.

A harvest season that allows the harvest of up to twelve (12) mountain lions in the Pine Ridge, with a sub-limit of six (6) females, is recommended for the following reasons:

1) The Pine Ridge population has been identified as a population that would be resilient to harvest.

2) To provide harvest opportunities for the species in this area.

3) Maintaining a high harvest level is necessary to bring the population density within staff targets at levels landowners are willing to accept.

The proposed season is designed to provide harvest opportunity, and allow the population to remain resilient and healthy, while reducing abundance. Staff recommend maintaining the density of mountain lions at 4–7 mountain lions/100km^2 of suitable habitat over the next few years. The most recent density estimate using the 2023 population estimate is ~10.5/100km^2 – higher than staff targets.

A harvest limit is recommended for controlling the number harvested with the hunting season ending as soon as the limit is reached or the season closing date occurs, whichever happens first. A limit of twelve (12) lions is appropriate to meet the management objective and corresponds to a maximum harvest rate of 17% of the most recent population estimate. This harvest limit is warranted to reduce the population to within density targets, while allowing the population to remain resilient and healthy in accordance with the Nebraska Mountain Lion Management Plan.

The mean number of non-harvest known mortalities in the Pine Ridge over the last three years (2022–2024) is nine per year. The maximum total impact of the recommended harvest including a typical normal number of known mortalities would be 30%. Depending on the demographics of the mortalities, this could reduce the population to within management goals.

Staff recommend restricting the number of females allowed under the harvest limit to ensure population resiliency so that future seasons remain feasible. Small mountain lion populations rely on immigration, particularly by males, and recruitment of female offspring from within the

population of resident adult females. Since female mountain lions are more likely to stay in the area they were born and less likely than males to disperse long distances, harvest of females has a greater likelihood of impacting subsequent population productivity.

Niobrara Harvest Objective: To provide a harvest opportunity for mountain lions that will allow the population to remain resilient and healthy, while keeping the population stable or slowing growth.

A harvest season that allows the harvest of up to six (6) mountain lions in the Niobrara Unit, with a sub-limit of three (3) females, is recommended for the following reasons:

1) The Niobrara Valley population has been identified as a population that would be resilient to harvest.

2) To provide harvest opportunities for the species in this area.

3) Harvest is necessary to stabilize the population or slow growth and maintain the population at levels landowners are willing to accept.

A harvest limit is recommended for controlling the number harvested with the hunting season ending as soon as the limit is reached or the season closing date occurs, whichever happens first. A limit of six lions with a sublimit of three females is appropriate to meet the management objective and corresponds to a potential maximum harvest rate of 18% of the number of mountain lions detected in 2024. This harvest limit is warranted to prevent the population from quickly increasing to densities that may reduce tolerance, while allowing the population to remain resilient and healthy in accordance with the Nebraska Mountain Lion Management Plan.

The mean number of non-harvest known mortalities in the Niobrara over the last three years (2022–2024) is three per year. The potential maximum total impact of the recommended harvest including a typical number of known mortalities would be 26%. Depending on the demographics of the mortalities, this could slow or halt population growth or reduce the population.

Wildcat Hills Harvest Objective: To provide a harvest opportunity for mountain lions that will reduce the population.

A harvest season that allows the harvest of up to three (3) mountain lions in the Wildcat Hills Unit, with a sub-limit of two (2) females, is recommended for the following reasons:

1) The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission board of Commissioners voted to amend staff recommendations at the June 2025 Commission meeting to include a total harvest limit of three and sublimit of two females for the Wildcat Hills Unit.

2) To provide harvest opportunities for the species in this area.

A harvest limit is recommended for controlling the number harvested with the hunting season ending as soon as the limit is reached or the season closing date occurs, whichever happens first. A limit of three lions with a sublimit of two females corresponds to a potential maximum harvest rate of 12% of the number of mountain lions detected in 2024 and 17% of the number estimated in January 2025. These rates do not account for the high number of known mortalities that occurred after the estimates were made, therefore harvest rates may be considerably higher. This harvest limit may or may not allow the population to remain resilient and healthy in accordance with the Nebraska Mountain Lion Management Plan depending on demographics of the individual mountain lions harvested.

The mean number of known mortalities in the Wildcat Hills over the last three years (2022–2024) is four per year. The potential maximum total impact of the recommended harvest including a typical number of known mortalities would be 27% of the number detected in 2024 and 39% of the number estimated in 2025. Depending on the demographics of the mortalities, this would likely decrease the population.

Harvest Design

The 2026 harvest season design is modelled after the previous season. The Pine Ridge Unit has the same boundaries as the Pine Ridge firearm deer unit (Figure 5). The Niobrara Unit extends from the eastern border of the Pine Ridge unit to NE Hwy 281 due to consistent evidence of resident mountain lions in this area. The Wildcat Hills Unit has the same boundaries as Elk Unit #4.

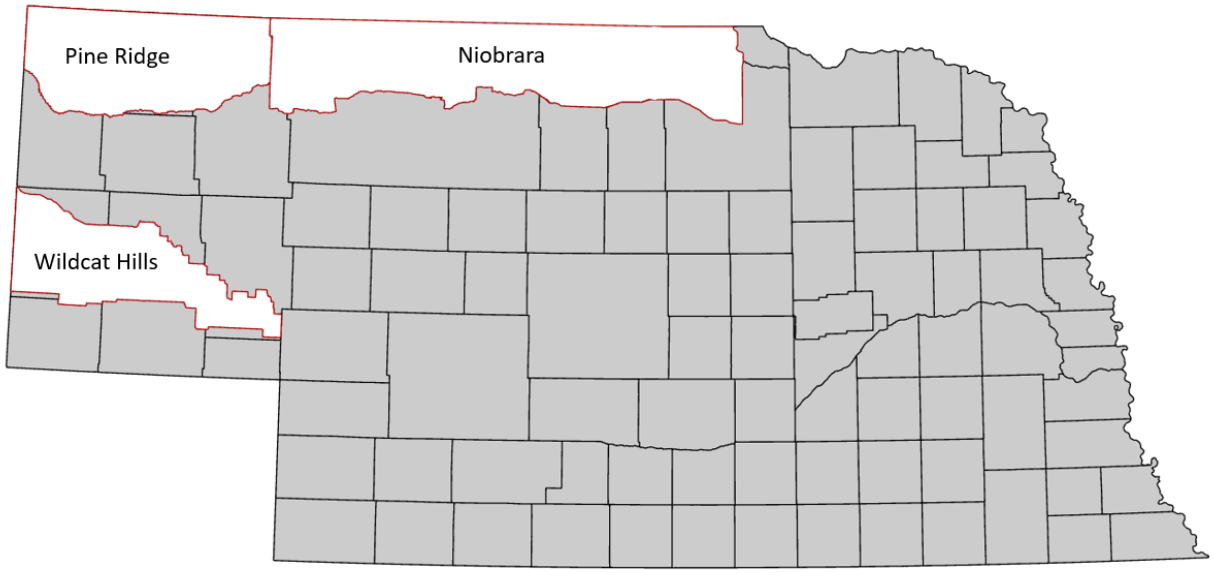

Figure 5. The Pine Ridge Unit has the same boundaries as the Pine Ridge firearm deer unit. The Niobrara Unit extends from the eastern edge of the Pine Ridge unit, east to NE Hwy 281. The Wildcat Hills Unit is based on the boundaries of Elk Unit #4.

The units will have two possible harvest seasons: 1) Season 1, which is designed to maximize opportunity by allowing a relatively large number of hunters (80/lion in the limit for the unit) to hunt without the aid of dogs, and 2) a possible Auxiliary Season, which will take place only if the harvest limit is not met during Season 1 in that unit. The harvest limit for the Auxiliary Season would be the remainder of the harvest limit from Season 1 in that unit. Permittees from Season 1 would need to apply to convert their Season 1 permit to an Auxiliary Season permit. A number of permits equal to the number of mountain lions remaining in the harvest limit would be issued via lottery. Hunters would be allowed to hunt with the aid of dogs during an auxiliary season.

Season 1 Design:

- Season Dates: January 2 through the end of February 2026, except the season will immediately close if either the annual harvest limit or female sub-limit is reached prior to the end of February.
- 80 permits issued via lottery to residents for each mountain lion in the harvest limit of that unit.
- Hunting with the aid of dogs is not allowed during Season 1.

Auxiliary Season Design:

- If the harvest limit is not reached during Season 1, an auxiliary season will be held in that unit.
- Season Dates: March 14 through March 31, 2026, except the season shall immediately close if either the annual harvest limit or female sub-limit is reached prior to the end of March.
- Harvest limits: The harvest limit for the Auxiliary Season is the remainder of the harvest limit from Season 1 in that unit.
- One Auxiliary Season permit will be issued via lottery (to a Season 1 permit holder that applies to convert their permit) for each mountain lion remaining in the harvest limit in that unit. Successful hunters from Season 1 will not be eligible for an Auxiliary Season permit.
- Hunting with the aid of dogs is allowed during an auxiliary season, if an auxiliary season is held.

Additional Harvest Rules

- Permit Bag Limit: One mountain lion of either sex
- Shooting Hours: Sunrise to sunset
- Checking: Any mountain lion harvested must be reported to the Commission within eight (8) hours of recovering the animal using a phone number or website specified by the Commission, or in person at a district office during normal business hours. The unfrozen mountain lion must be presented to a Commission representative within 24 hours of the time it is killed to allow for inspection and attachment of an official harvest seal. Once notified of harvest, the Commission may make arrangements for a later check. Mountain lions must be checked in the management unit where they were harvested.
- Weapons Allowed: Firearms and archery equipment allowed for big game.

It Shall Be Unlawful To

- Harvest or attempt to harvest a mountain lion with a spotted coat (kitten) or any mountain lion accompanying another mountain lion.
- Hunt mountain lions without first confirming that the harvest limit or female sub-limit has not been met, and the season is open each day by checking the Commission-provided toll-free number or season status website.
- Hunt mountain lions with the aid of dogs, traps, or bait, with the exception that dogs may be used during an auxiliary season, if an auxiliary season is held.
- Fail to check or report any mountain lion taken.

- Falsely check or report the harvest of any mountain lion.
- Separate a mountain lion carcass into portions smaller than the head, and quarters with proof of gender naturally attached, before successfully completing the check station process. Quarters shall mean four (4) legs with femur or scapula naturally attached and loins.
- Obtain more than one mountain lion permit per calendar year.

Summary

Mountain lions have returned to Nebraska through natural expansion from adjacent states. Population information for units has been derived from genetic information, the GPS collaring project, trail cameras, known mortalities, and other sources.

A hunting season has been proposed for all units. The objective for the Pine Ridge is to provide a harvest opportunity for mountain lions that will allow the population to remain resilient and healthy, while reducing the population size. The objective for the Niobrara Unit is to provide a harvest opportunity for mountain lions that will allow the population to remain resilient and healthy, while keeping the population stable or slowing growth. The objective for the Wildcat Hills Unit is to provide a harvest opportunity for mountain lions that will reduce the population.

The number of permits issued, and use of dogs in a possible auxiliary season, will allow the harvest limit to be met while decreasing the likelihood of exceeding the harvest limit. Genetic surveys taking place in June and July 2025 in the Pine Ridge, along with monitoring of collared individuals, and tracking of all known mortalities, will allow for the effect of the seasons to be assessed, and provide information to inform future harvest decisions.

The Commission recognizes these populations are connected by immigration and emigration to mountain lion populations in Nebraska, South Dakota, Colorado, and Wyoming. We will continue to use sound science and the guidance of the Mountain Lion Management Plan to manage mountain lions in Nebraska over the long term.