



Northeast Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies, Inc.

RESOLUTION

Restoration of Large Carnivores

WHEREAS, the Northeast Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies, Inc. (“Association”) is a quasi-governmental entity representing state (including the District of Columbia), provincial, and federal fish and wildlife agencies in the northeastern United States and eastern Canadian Provinces; and

WHEREAS, the Constitution and Bylaws establish the objectives of the Association; and

WHEREAS, the objectives of the Association includes: (1) To encourage and promote better understanding and cooperation among its several members in dealing with the conservation of fish and wildlife resources; (2) To assist in the coordination and implementation of fish and wildlife programs of mutual interest to its members; (3) To promote a high level of fish and wildlife administration throughout the northeast region; and (4) To encourage and provide for regional projects that conserve wildlife, fish, and their habitats; and

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WHEREAS, the Association has a long history of multi-state collaboration at the regional scale benefitting landscape conservation, and fish and wildlife populations; and

WHEREAS, the northeastern States and Provinces strongly support the conservation of fish and wildlife species, including initiatives to increase the range or abundance of certain fish and wildlife species when habitat, biological, social, cultural, and economic conditions support such increases; and

WHEREAS, notwithstanding the occasional verified documentation of a mountain lion or gray wolf or both in the northeastern States, there is no reliable evidence that a sustaining population of either species is present in the northeastern States; and

WHEREAS, from time-to-time individual citizens or nongovernmental organizations may advocate for the restoration of mountain lions or gray wolves or both to one or several northeastern States¹; and

¹ While this resolution does not explicitly address potential future restoration proposals involving other extirpated species, the principles herein are applicable to any “rewilding” initiative seeking to restore extirpated species to the northeast, including but not limited to, large carnivores.

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WHEREAS, by law, the individual northeastern States and Provinces have legal authority, as trustees of fish and wildlife species, to consider implementation of any restoration program involving mountain lions or gray wolves or both; and

WHEREAS, as large carnivores, the restoration of either the mountain lion or gray wolf or both would have significant environmental, ecological, economic, and public-safety implications, including potential human-health impacts associated with encounters with large carnivores by citizens of the northeastern States and eastern Canadian Provinces; and

WHEREAS, the large home ranges and dispersal behaviors of both mountain lions and gray wolves means that a restoration effort in any one jurisdiction has significant environmental and economic consequences for adjacent States and Provinces, and potentially for the entire northeast; and

WHEREAS, the objectives of the Association require a regional approach to multi-jurisdictional/landscape-scale fish and wildlife management policy; and

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WHEREAS, the existence of mountain lions or gray wolves or both on the northeastern landscape requires active management, including the potential for lethal management actions, including hunting or control of depredations or other measures to address human conflict; and

WHEREAS, the Association affirms that decisions regarding the introduction, management, or conservation of large carnivores rest exclusively within the statutory authority and professional expertise of state and provincial wildlife agencies, and should not be directed or otherwise compelled by external organizations or ballot initiatives , while recognizing the importance of collaborative partnerships with federal agencies that support, rather than override, state and provincial authority; and

WHEREAS, in most jurisdictions, existing legal frameworks for managing mountain lions or gray wolves or both do not adequately authorize agencies to manage their populations or to effectively mitigate conflicts with human interests; and

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WHEREAS, the restoration of large carnivores carries substantial long-term financial obligations related to monitoring, conflict mitigation, depredation compensation, enforcement, and public outreach, and such obligations must not be imposed on any jurisdiction without secured and sustainable funding;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Northeast Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies, Inc. is strongly opposed to any effort to restore mountain lions or gray wolves or both when such efforts fail to consider the regional implications of such an initiative; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the evaluation of any restoration effort involving these species must be comprehensive and multidisciplinary, incorporating ecological, social, cultural, and economic factors, evaluated at the landscape scale; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that no restoration initiative should proceed without rigorous, peer-reviewed scientific assessments demonstrating ecological suitability, long-term habitat viability, and social carrying capacity across all affected jurisdictions; and

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BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that no jurisdiction should undertake any restoration initiative involving mountain lions or gray wolves or both without prior formal consultation with, and documented consideration of cross-boundary impacts to, all states and provinces within the region; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that any proposed restoration effort must demonstrate broad community support and include comprehensive assessments of public-safety risks, livestock vulnerability impacts, and implications for rural communities and economies; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Association opposes any effort—legislative, judicial, or otherwise—that would compel a state or provincial wildlife agency to introduce or reintroduce large carnivores contrary to the agency’s professional judgment or without regional agreement; and

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BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, no restoration effort involving these species should be sanctioned or otherwise supported in the absence of comprehensive legal authorities and requisite financial and operational resources to manage those species; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Association shall communicate the substance of this resolution to appropriate stakeholders and policymakers when warranted and with the consultation and consent of the respective state or provincial fish and wildlife director where any of the aforementioned initiatives are under consideration.

Adopted:

April 2, 2026

White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia

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