

**Report to Survey Participants**  
**Mountain Lions in South Dakota**  
**A Public Opinion Survey – 2002**



**Conducted by:**

**South Dakota State University  
&  
South Dakota Game, Fish & Parks**

**Larry M. Gigliotti**

Dear South Dakota Citizen,

This is a summary report of the survey of South Dakota residents' opinions about mountain lions in South Dakota that was conducted this spring (2002). We sincerely thank all of you who participated by completing and returning your booklet questionnaire. We had 1,114 completed questionnaires returned for a return rate of 62.5%.

The Game, Fish and Parks Department is currently funding a multi-year research project through South Dakota State University to learn more about the status of the mountain lion in South Dakota. The information will be used to develop a mountain lion management plan for South Dakota. Public opinion and understanding of mountain lions will be a critical component of developing and implementing any mountain lion plan. This public opinion survey was the first step in developing the social component of the South Dakota mountain lion plan.

For a complete copy of the public opinion survey results, please send your name and address to:

Larry Gigliotti  
South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks  
523 E. Capitol  
Pierre, SD 57501

or send your name and address to me by e-mail: [larry.gigliotti@state.sd.us](mailto:larry.gigliotti@state.sd.us)

and ask for the **2002 Mountain Lion Public Opinion Report** (will be available by September, 2002).

# Mountain Lions in South Dakota

## A Public Opinion Survey – 2002

The following are some selected results from the public opinion survey about mountain lions that was conducted this spring. Based on the responses to many of the questions South Dakota residents fell along a continuum from strongly disliking mountain lions to strongly liking mountain lions, which was divided into five separate groups (Table 1).

**Table 1.** General attitude towards mountain lions in South Dakota.

<b>5 Attitude Groups Related to Mountain Lions (brief description)</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Strongly Contra-lion</b> ( <i>strongly dislike mountain lions</i> )	105	9.8%
<b>Slightly Contra-lion</b> ( <i>slightly dislike mountain lions</i> )	240	22.5%
<b>Neutral</b> ( <i>neutral about mountain lions in south Dakota</i> )	120	11.3%
<b>Slightly Pro-lion</b> ( <i>slightly favorable towards mountain lions</i> )	360	33.7%
<b>Strongly Pro-lion</b> ( <i>strongly favorable towards mountain lions</i> )	242	22.7%
<b>Total</b>	1,067	100%



Most of the public (72.2%) agreed with the statement, “the presence of mountain lions is a sign of a healthy environment” (Table 2).

**Table 2.** Attitude towards mountain lions in South Dakota – “*The presence of mountain lions is a sign of a healthy environment.*”

<b>Attitude – “The presence of mountain lions is a sign of a healthy environment.”</b>	<b>S.D. Residents</b>		<b>College Students<sup>1</sup></b>	
	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	281	25.7%	7	33.3%
<b>Moderately Agree</b>	316	28.9%	10	47.6%
<b>Slightly Agree</b>	193	17.6%	3	14.3%
<b>Neutral / No Opinion</b>	178	16.3%	0	0.0%
<b>Slightly Disagree</b>	35	3.2%	1	4.8%
<b>Moderately Disagree</b>	31	2.8%	0	0.0%
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	60	5.5%	0	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	1,094	100%	21	100%
<b>SUMMARY RESULTS</b>				
<b>AGREE</b>	790	72.2%	20	95.2%
<b>NEUTRAL / NO OPINION</b>	178	16.3%	0	0.0%
<b>DISAGREE</b>	126	11.5%	1	4.8%

<sup>1</sup>South Dakota State University students taking a wildlife management class



Most of the public (55.8%) agreed with the statement, “mountain lions should have the right to exist wherever they may occur” (Table 3).

**Table 3.** Attitude towards mountain lions in South Dakota – “*Mountain lions should have the right to exist wherever they may occur.*”

Attitude – “Mountain lions should have the right to exist wherever they may occur.”	S.D. Residents		College Students <sup>1</sup>	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Strongly Agree	205	18.7%	11	52.4%
Moderately Agree	230	21.0%	6	28.6%
Slightly Agree	176	16.1%	1	4.8%
Neutral / No Opinion	87	7.9%	0	0.0%
Slightly Disagree	149	13.6%	2	9.5%
Moderately Disagree	101	9.2%	0	0.0%
Strongly Disagree	148	13.5%	1	4.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,096</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>SUMMARY RESULTS</b>				
<b>AGREE</b>	611	55.8%	18	85.7%
<b>NEUTRAL / NO OPINION</b>	87	7.9%	0	0.0%
<b>DISAGREE</b>	398	36.3%	3	14.3%

<sup>1</sup>South Dakota State University students taking a wildlife management class



Almost half (47.4%) of the public reported that having a healthy, viable population of mountain lions was important to them (Table 4).

**Table 4.** Attitude towards mountain lions in South Dakota – “*Having a healthy, viable population of mountain lions in South Dakota is important to me.*”

Attitude – “Having a healthy, viable population of mountain lions in South Dakota is important to me.”	S.D. Residents		College Students <sup>1</sup>	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Strongly Agree	146	13.3%	12	57.1%
Moderately Agree	164	14.9%	4	19.0%
Slightly Agree	210	19.1%	4	19.0%
Neutral / No Opinion	308	28.1%	0	0.0%
Slightly Disagree	76	6.9%	0	0.0%
Moderately Disagree	69	6.3%	0	0.0%
Strongly Disagree	125	11.4%	1	4.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,098</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>SUMMARY RESULTS</b>				
<b>AGREE</b>	520	47.4%	20	95.2%
<b>NEUTRAL / NO OPINION</b>	308	28.1%	0	0.0%
<b>DISAGREE</b>	270	24.6%	1	4.8%

<sup>1</sup>South Dakota State University students taking a wildlife management class



Most people (61.8%) did not feel that having mountain lions in South Dakota was too dangerous a risk to people (Table 5).

**Table 5.** Attitude towards mountain lions in South Dakota – *“Having mountain lions in South Dakota is too dangerous a risk to people.”*

Attitude – “Having mountain lions in South Dakota is too dangerous a risk to people.”	S.D. Residents		College Students <sup>1</sup>	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Strongly Agree	79	7.2%	1	4.8%
Moderately Agree	80	7.3%	0	0.0%
Slightly Agree	119	10.8%	1	4.8%
Neutral / No Opinion	142	12.9%	1	4.8%
Slightly Disagree	203	18.5%	3	14.3%
Moderately Disagree	216	19.6%	5	23.8%
Strongly Disagree	261	23.7%	10	47.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,100</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>SUMMARY RESULTS</b>				
<b>AGREE</b>	278	25.3%	2	9.5%
<b>NEUTRAL / NO OPINION</b>	142	12.9%	1	4.8%
<b>DISAGREE</b>	680	61.8%	18	85.7%

<sup>1</sup>South Dakota State University students taking a wildlife management class



Most of the public (80.7%) agreed with the statement, “by following some simple precautions, people can safely live in areas occupied by mountain lions” (Table 6).

**Table 6.** Attitude towards mountain lions in South Dakota – *“By following some simple precautions, people can safely live in areas occupied by mountain lions.”*

Attitude – “By following some simple precautions, people can safely live in areas occupied by mountain lions.”	S.D. Residents		College Students <sup>1</sup>	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Strongly Agree	328	29.8%	11	52.4%
Moderately Agree	349	31.8%	10	47.6%
Slightly Agree	210	19.1%	0	0.0%
Neutral / No Opinion	84	7.6%	0	0.0%
Slightly Disagree	42	3.8%	0	0.0%
Moderately Disagree	37	3.4%	0	0.0%
Strongly Disagree	49	4.5%	0	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,099</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>SUMMARY RESULTS</b>				
<b>AGREE</b>	887	80.7%	21	100%
<b>NEUTRAL / NO OPINION</b>	84	7.6%	0	0.0%
<b>DISAGREE</b>	128	11.7%	0	0.0%

<sup>1</sup>South Dakota State University students taking a wildlife management class