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Composition I

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The Mountain Lion: Endangered or a Danger?

On April 23, 1994, as Barbara Schoener was jogging in the Sierra foothills of California, she was pounced on from behind by a mountain lion. After an apparent struggle with her attacker, Schoener was killed by bites to her neck and head (Rychnovsky 39). In 1996, because of Schoener's death and other highly publicized attacks, California politicians presented voters with Proposition 197, which contained provisions repealing much of a 1990 law enacted to protect the lions. The 1990 law outlawed sport hunting of mountain lions and even prevented the Department of Fish and Game from thinning the lion population.

Proposition 197 was rejected by a large margin, probably because the debate turned into a struggle between hunting and antihunting factions. When California politicians revisit the mountain lion question, they should frame the issue in a new way. A future proposition should retain the ban on sport hunting but allow the Department of Fish and Game to control the population. Wildlife management would reduce the number of lion attacks on humans and in the long run would also protect the lions.