



OREGON HUNTERS ASSOCIATION

WILDLIFE • HABITAT • HUNTERS' RIGHTS

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Testimony in Support of HB 2795

Chair Witt and members of the House Natural Resources Committee, for the record I am Al Elkins representing the Oregon Hunters Association (OHA). The mission of OHA is to "provide an abundant huntable wildlife resource in Oregon for present and future generations, enhancement of wildlife habitat and protection of hunter's rights." Last year alone OHA and it's 10,500 members put over \$150,000 of its own money and volunteer hours into wildlife and habitat enhancement projects in Oregon.

Protecting wildlife for future generations is why OHA is here today in support of HB 2795. In this testimony OHA would like to address the wildlife management issues that this bill addresses.

What Wildlife Management Issues Does This Bill Address?

You will hear testimony today in support of the bill based on research and science. In essence the science and research have told us that:

- Currently, Oregon has a major cougar wildlife management problem.
- Without the use of dogs, hunting success is very limited, and doesn't provide a check on cougar populations.
- Biologists report that cougar numbers have tripled to 6,000 in the past 15 years and that cougar complaints have increased exponentially.
- More cougars are moving into rural and urban residential areas in search of food.
- Oregon's burgeoning cougar population has resulted in dramatic increases in these key problem areas:
 - Public safety concerns (cougars roaming parks, neighborhoods and schoolyards and showing no fear of humans)
 - Attacks, some fatal, on humans in Oregon and other western states
 - Depredation on domestic animals, both livestock and pets
 - Declining numbers of deer and elk (cougar predation on fawns and calves are the main component).

What Does This Bill Do?

HB 2795 does the following:

- Creates a pilot program that allows a person to use dogs in the hunting and in the nonlethal pursuit of cougars within a county that elects to participate in the pilot program.
- Authorizes the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife to designate wildlife management areas of certain counties. These counties are: Umatilla, Wallow, Union, Baker, Grant, Douglas, Coos, Curry, Josephine, Jackson, Linn and Marion.
- Specifies that each governing body of each county identified above will place on the ballot at an election to be held in 2020 a county measure asking the electors of the county whether the county will participate in a State Department of Fish and Wildlife pilot program allowing the use of dogs in the hunting and in the nonlethal pursuit of cougars.
- Allows for separate hunting and nonlethal pursuit seasons within each country participating in the pilot program.
- Specifies that any county not listed in the bill can on or after June 30, 2022 approve a ballot measure for inclusion in the pilot program.

The time to act is now

We have watched this problem grow over the past 20 years, and it is clear that it is not going to be solved without a change in cougar management policies and more tools to manage this growing population. Something needs to be done. We don't want to read about cougars mauling children. It is clear that management by ballot measure is not a responsible way to manage dynamic wildlife populations. We need to look at the available science and the impacts of unlimited cougar populations to realize that legislative action is needed to deal with this issue.

We urge passage of HB 2795.

That concludes my testimony. I will be glad to answer any questions.