



OREGON HUNTERS ASSOCIATION

WILDLIFE • HABITAT • HUNTERS' RIGHTS

P.O. Box 1706, Medford, OR 97501 • (541) 772-7313 • Fax (541) 772-0964
oregonhunters.org • oha@ccountry.net

February 20, 2019

Chair Witt and Members of the House Natural Resources Committee:

Please Support HB-2795

I am Paul Donheffner, the Legislative Committee Chairman for OHA. I live near Salem. My neighbors and I raise sheep. In the past 3 years we have had at least 5 cougar kills on our properties, which are surrounded by homes on small acreage. Something needs to be done to reduce cougar numbers.

The only way to effectively control cougars is hunting with dogs. Ask ODFW, ask any wildlife biologist who has studied cougars, and they will tell you that this is the only effective way to limit numbers. We have a population of over 6,400 cougars and rising. Even when every hunter carries a cougar tag, the harvest number is only 250-300 a year, which doesn't slow the population one bit. As more and more cougars spread out in search of food, they're moving into neighborhoods where they don't belong.

The pilot program outlined in HB-2795 is a good start, allowing 12 counties with high cougar populations a chance to reduce threats to human safety, lessen livestock depredation and reduce predation on our deer and elk game animals. We desperately need a new approach and this bill has my full support.

Human safety is a growing issue. In 2018 there were 2 fatal attacks in the NW, one near Seattle another on Mt. Hood. Cougars are being found close to schools, playgrounds and residential areas. One was "dispatched" last week in Bend. At a hearing before the Interim House Agriculture Committee last fall, there was testimony by ODFW's Director, Curt Melcher, indicating that human attacks are not a question of "if" but "when". Do we have to wait for it to be a young child?

OHA recognizes that cougars have a place in Oregon, but like other wildlife species, they require management. ODFW can control harvest numbers to ensure a healthy viable population. They have a target of not less than 3,000. We are twice over that level and the resulting negative impacts are clear.

I encourage you to approve HB-2795 so we can have the tools necessary to manage and control cougar populations.