

## HB 2795 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

### House Committee On Natural Resources

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**Meeting Dates:** 2/21

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#### WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Directs the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) to create pilot program that allows persons to use dogs for hunting or nonlethal pursuit of cougars within specified counties electing to participate in pilot program. Allows non-specified counties to elect to participate in pilot program following approval by ballot measure. Requires the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission (Commission) to adopt rules to implement pilot program that: protect public safety, property, and game mammals; generate data necessary for required report; reflect current and future predictions of cougar and game mammal populations; and ensure that number of cougars prescribed for taking is met.

Requires the Commission to issue cougar tags on equal-footing to persons in counties participating in pilot program and persons in counties not participating in pilot program. Allows Commission to limit number of cougars taken pursuant to wildlife policy goals (496.012).

Requires Department to submit report no later than September 15, 2024 to Legislative Assembly. Requires that report contain information on: pilot program efficacy; recommendations on pilot program extension, an encounter and sighting reporting system, and a cougar population management system that controls population levels; nonlethal means to decrease human encounters with cougars; pilot program cougar population data; an analysis of deer and elk population status before and during the pilot program; and relevant Department elk predation and nutrition research.

Requires that counties identified in measure place pilot program on 2020 ballot.

Sunsets program January 2, 2026.

*REVENUE: May have revenue impact, but no statement yet issued*

*FISCAL: May have fiscal impact, but no statement yet issued*

#### ISSUES DISCUSSED:

##### EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

##### BACKGROUND:

In 1994, Ballot Measure 18 passed, which banned the use of bait to hunt black bear, and the use of dogs to hunt black bear or cougar. Currently, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) can appoint agents to use one or more dogs to hunt cougar in order to carry out management plans, and agent dog use is reported on biennially to the Legislative Assembly (ORS 498.164). The use of dogs for hunting cougar is also permitted in the case of a cougar causing damage, posing public health risk, or creating a public nuisance (ORS 498.012).

House Bill 2795 would direct the Department to create a pilot program that allows persons to use dogs for hunting or nonlethal pursuit of cougars within specified counties, requires the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission to issue and limit cougar tags, requires the Department to submit a report on the efficacy of the pilot program in 2024, and sunsets the pilot program on January 2, 2026.

PRELIMINARY