

February 21, 2019

Chair Witt and Members of the Committee:

Testimony on House Bill 2795 and House Bill 2370
House Committee on Natural Resources

HB 2370

Allows electors of county to approve measure allowing use of dogs for hunting, pursuing or taking cougars within county.

Authorizes State Department of Fish and Wildlife to issue resident of approving county special cougar tag that allows use of dogs for hunting, pursuing or taking cougars within county.

HB 2795

Directs State Department of Fish and Wildlife to create pilot program that allows persons to use dogs for hunting, or nonlethal pursuit of, cougars within county electing to participate in pilot-program.

I vigorously OPPOSE both bills and urge you to join me and OPPOSE both bills.

HB 2795 provides for what it calls a “pilot program,” but it really is just another proposal to resume sport hunting of cougars with dogs. Oregon voters have said twice – on ballot measures in 1994 and 1996 – that they consider it inhumane and unsporting to hunt cougars with packs of dogs. (The dogs chase the cougar up a tree or into another place where it has no escape and the “hunter” shoots it at close range.) The Legislature should not undermine this will of the voters without a compelling reason supported by reliable evidence. There is no such compelling reason or reliable evidence.

Killing cougars will not increase deer or elk herds. Because ecological systems are complex, heavily persecuting cougars will fail to address the underlying malnutrition problems that deer face. Their populations must stay at a smaller size relative to their prey or they risk starvation themselves. Thus, cougars self-regulate. When prey populations decline, so do cougar populations. As vital top carnivores, cougars maintain Oregon’s sensitive and highly-valued wild spaces with their behaviors. They prevent starvation and chronic wasting disease among their prey by regulating numbers and taking the sickest and weakest prey.

For these and other reasons put forth by Humane Society of the United States, Humane Voters Oregon, and others, I ask you to oppose HB 2370 and HB 2795. Thank you for your consideration.

Philip Mandel
Beaverton OR