

Submitter: Thomas Hyde  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Senate Committee On Natural Resources and  
Wildfire  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB769

Testimony in Support of Oregon Senate Bill 769  
Submitted by Tom Hyde, Rancher and Conservationist  
Chiloquin, Oregon

Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Tom Hyde. I am a fourth-generation rancher, business owner, conservationist, and the operator of a fly-fishing outfit at the headwaters of the Williamson River on my family's ranch in Southern Oregon. Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony in strong support of Senate Bill 769.

SB 769 is a critical step toward ensuring that rural communities have the ability to manage cougar populations responsibly and safely by allowing counties to opt out of the statewide prohibition on using dogs to hunt or pursue cougars, pending voter approval.

As someone who has spent my life living on and stewarding the land, I deeply respect Oregon's wildlife and understand the importance of maintaining a balanced ecosystem. Cougars are a vital part of that balance, but unchecked populations can pose serious risks to livestock, pets, and even human safety in rural areas.

On our ranch, we have firsthand experience with these challenges. Livestock losses and increased sightings near homes and ranching operations are becoming more frequent. These incidents not only cause financial hardship but also threaten the well-being of families who work the land. Responsible wildlife management tools—including the use of dogs—are sometimes necessary to mitigate these risks while maintaining cougar populations sustainably.

What I appreciate most about SB 769 is that it respects local decision-making. This bill allows voters within a county to make decisions based on the specific needs and realities of their community. It empowers local people who live and work alongside these animals every day to have a voice in wildlife management.

This legislation does not undermine conservation efforts. Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) would still retain its authority to ensure that any county-level decisions align with state conservation objectives and population management goals.

I believe SB 769 offers a thoughtful, balanced solution that promotes both public safety and responsible conservation. I respectfully urge you to support this bill and give rural communities the tools they need to protect their families, livelihoods, and ecosystems.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,  
Tom Hyde  
Chiloquin, Oregon