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

Oregonians are opposed to trophy hunting of cougars, including with the use of hounds, and want to keep them protected. Oregonians have already shown where they stand on this issue – twice.

In 1994, Oregon voters passed Measure 18. For 30 years, it has protected cougars and bears from the cruel, abusive and unsporting practices of baiting and hounding. In 1996, Oregonians decisively protected Measure 18 by an even larger margin. As a veterinarian, I am totally opposed to hound hunting of cougars. Its actions are completely against humane treatment of animals, and I believe it is misrepresenting fair chase. Setting off hounds with GPS tracking collars and allowing them to chase down any cougar that might be near until exhaustion ensues and it escapes to a tree, is the ultimate in lazy hunting. It demonstrates indiscriminate killing of an animal.

Current law already allows the use of hounds to address issues with individual cougars who threaten property or public safety, or to carry out state wildlife management objectives. Allowing the indiscriminate killing of Oregon's cougar population, including with cruel and unsporting hounding methods, is not sound wildlife management and not in the best interest of Oregonians or our state's cougar population.

Measure 18 already allows state and federal wildlife agents to hound cougars in the advent of threats to property or public safety and to carry out state wildlife-management objectives. This exemption has been successful in removing individual cougars involved in conflicts with humans, pets, and livestock while retaining the protections the voters want from abusive hunting methods.

Culling a native carnivore population, especially one as sensitive as cougars, is not an effective management approach and will likely disrupt their communities resulting in more, not less, conflicts with humans, pets and livestock.

According to the nation's top carnivore biologists, ODFW grossly overstates Oregon's cougars by including kittens – most of which don't survive to adulthood – in their estimates. By so doing, and by using other flawed population-estimation techniques, ODFW creates the erroneous impression that Oregon has by far the highest cougar population in the nation. ODFW's own Cougar management Plan clearly states that there are about 6000 total cougars in OR, INCLUDING kittens! So there are about 3000 adult cougars in OR. Over 50% mortality of kittens precludes any significance of counting kittens in our cougar populations. NO OTHER STATE BUT OR counts kittens for this reason!

Studies show that trophy hunting of cougars exacerbate conflicts with humans, pets and livestock because when adult cats are removed – particularly resident adult

males – younger, less experienced cats move into those vacancies, and they are the individuals most likely to engage in livestock predation. This evidence for this research was produced by Rob Wielgus , PhD, past director of the Large Carnivore Lab at WSU. A few years ago he gave a presentation on his research at a ReWilding Conference in OR based on 30 yrs. Of studying cougar behavior and biology. I doubt that the two congressmen presenting SB 769 have done any amount of research on cougars. They only bring up the typical fear and myths about wild predators. It is high time for this topic to be dumped into the garbage pile of false narratives!