

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

Dear Senate Committee,

I would like to share my experience and observations from being an avid outdoorsman all of my life. My father and I have been hunting mule deer in the Fort Rock unit for approximately 23 years (from 2000 to 2023). Most years we would draw our tags. We loved to hunt in the Walker Rim road closure area and do lots of walking away from the roads and other hunters. Early on in our time hunting the Fort Rock unit, we would often see 15 to 25 deer per day of hunting. The last few years that we hunted there, we would be lucky to see 3 or 4 deer in a day, and often would not see any deer. We did however see a cougar on two different occasions, and often saw cougar tracks and droppings. The terrain we were hunting was amazing mule deer habitat with lots of food and water sources. We stopped hunting in this area not only because of the lack of deer, but we felt it was irresponsible to harvest any of the few deer left from such a struggling herd. I'm sure that the predator problem is not the only contributing factor to the significant decline in the central Oregon mule deer herds, but it must be playing a substantial role. I am definitely not for eliminating cougars from the area, but I believe there needs to be significant reduction in the amount cougars that are allowed to roam areas where deer are in major decline. Cougars are extremely difficult to hunt without the use of hounds. Let's let ODFW use science to control the number of cougars in our state that will allow deer to have a chance at rebounding and growing their population

Sincerely,
Rich Lattin