

I am writing today in strong support of HB 796. My name is Chad Dotson. I am a 5th generation Wallowa County resident. After receiving a Biology degree from Oregon State University, I worked with ODFW on Bighorn Sheep Disease Research Projects and Elk Population Management. I then worked 7 years as a habitat and wildlife manager for the Nature Conservancy. I am currently a habitat and wildlife manager in the private sector.

Since 1990, Mule deer herds across the state have been on a steady decline, all the while cougar populations across the state have doubled to an estimated 6,400 (as of April 2017). In 1990, Oregon had nearly 275,000 mule deer. Today, we have just over 161,000. A decrease of over 40%. The use of hound dogs to hunt cougars is the most effective tool in cougar population management. Under the guidance of ODFW, Houndsmen would be able to effectively select for appropriate animals for harvest while controlling population.

If Mule Deer herds were viewed as a budget, our herds are operating at a deficit annually. More deer are dying per year due to predation alone than are being inputed back into the population. On average, a single cougar kills 38 deer per year, this loss accounts for over 200,000 deer annually - far exceeding natural fawn recruitment. It is imperative to give wildlife managers the tools they need to be able to best manage their respective districts. I urge you to support HB 769 for the sake of conservation and science based wildlife management.

Respectfully,

Chad Dotson