

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

Natural Resources and Wildfire Committee,

I strongly support this bill and adamantly urge you to vote in its favor. Cougar population estimates are well above sustainable carrying capacity, more than double the minimum population goals set forth in 2017, and realistically underestimate the predator's actual numbers. Their overpopulation is having a devastating effect on wildlife numbers. They have wiped out the Bighorn Sheep on Hart Mountain Wildlife Refuge and almost annihilated the Bighorn Sheep in the Warner Valley. They have an increasingly negative impact on efforts to improve Mule Deer and Elk populations throughout Southeastern Oregon, and these are just the examples of which I have firsthand knowledge.

In addition, and arguably much more importantly, public safety is put at risk in our communities surrounded with excessive Cougar populations. In the past year there were at least three incidents in Harney County where Cougars were killed in or near city limits within citizen home sites. Instances of livestock predation by Cougars has increased.

Wildlife numbers have to be managed using the most effective tools at our disposal, and the only effective tool for Cougar mitigation is the use of pursuit dogs.

Counties must have the ability to address the problems they face using the means they deem necessary, within the bounds of the law. Thank you for your consideration of this paramount matter.

Rob Frank
Harney County Commissioner