

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

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On behalf of: All Oregonians
Committee: Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Wildfire
Subject: Support for SB 769

I am writing to express my strong support for reinstating the use of hounds for cougar management in Oregon. Since voters restricted this practice in 1994 and reaffirmed it in 1996, our deer and elk populations have declined significantly, and the cougar population has exploded. The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) has consistently reported the challenges of managing cougar populations under current restrictions, which have led to increased conflicts with livestock, pets, and even people. We must return decision-making power to our state wildlife professionals, allowing them to set science-based management objectives that benefit both predators and prey.

Wildlife management should be guided by science and evolving ecological data, not political campaigns or emotional rhetoric. Since the ban, cougar populations have expanded beyond sustainable levels, negatively impacting mule deer herds, which have dropped from over 300,000 to less than half that number. This decline is expected to worsen when new population estimates are released. Effective predator management is essential to restoring balance to Oregon's ecosystems.

Another common argument against hound hunting is that it constitutes "trophy hunting" or is "unfair." These claims are misleading. Cougars are elusive and rarely seen, even by lifelong hunters. Hound hunting is the best methods of being selective, for managing cougar populations, allowing hunters to identify and remove mature individuals while avoiding females with kittens. The notion that this practice results in widespread suffering or indiscriminate killing is not supported by wildlife experts.

Political activism should not override responsible wildlife management. The voices of Oregon residents who live with the consequences of unchecked cougar populations—ranchers, hunters, and rural communities—must be heard. Those opposing this bill often repeat the same talking points provided by national organizations, rather than considering the real-world impact on Oregonians and their livelihoods. We need policies based on sound wildlife science, not external political agendas.

I urge you to listen to the experts, examine the data, and make an informed decision that supports a balanced and healthy ecosystem. Oregon's wildlife deserves responsible management, and that includes the ability to control cougar populations effectively.