

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

I am writing today in strong support of the proposed bill allowing the use of dogs to manage cougar populations in Oregon. This bill offers a critical opportunity to address ongoing challenges with cougar overpopulation, and it should be left up to voters at the county level to make this important decision.

For years, Oregon's rural communities have grappled with the growing impact of cougars on local livestock populations, as well as the health of deer and elk populations. Since the measure to allow cougar management through dogs was voted down in 1994, there has been an alarming increase in cougar sightings, even within our towns and neighborhoods. This issue is not just an inconvenience—it is a matter of public safety. The tragic loss of a teenager to a cougar attack in California last year serves as a stark reminder that these animals, when left unchecked, can pose significant risks to human lives.

The increased presence of cougars in populated areas also speaks to the unsustainable growth of their numbers. Livestock owners are facing mounting losses, while deer and elk populations are struggling to survive. Our deer and elk herds simply cannot withstand the pressure of an expanding cougar population without intervention. By allowing controlled management of cougars through the use of dogs, we can help mitigate these risks, ensuring healthier wildlife populations and reducing the strain on local communities.

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) oversight, with well-defined quotas, will provide necessary safeguards to ensure that the cougar population does not grow unchecked. This approach will allow for balanced management that addresses the immediate concerns of wildlife conservation, while also safeguarding public safety and protecting livestock.

Additionally, the ability to manage cougar populations at the county level, as proposed by this bill, ensures that local communities can have a say in the methods and controls used in their area. This localized approach is essential for tailoring the management strategy to the unique needs of each community, whether it be addressing concerns over agricultural losses or mitigating public safety risks.

In conclusion, this bill offers a practical and necessary solution to an escalating problem. It ensures that cougar populations are responsibly managed and provides

protections for both wildlife and human safety. I urge you to support this bill and allow voters to make the decision about how best to address this issue at the county level.

Sincerely,
Conner Grauf