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OREGON CHAPTER SIERRA CLUB

1821 SE ANKENY ST • PORTLAND, OR 97214
PHONE (503) 238-0442 • FAX (503) 238-6281
OREGON.CHAPTER@SIERRACLUB.ORG
WWW.OREGON.SIERRACLUB.ORG

To: Members of the House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee

From: Rhett Lawrence, Oregon Chapter Sierra Club

Date: April 2, 2013

RE: House Bills 2624 and 3395

Chair Witt and Members of the Committee: Good morning, my name is Rhett Lawrence and I'm the Conservation Director for the Oregon Chapter of the Sierra Club. I'm here testifying on behalf of more than 20,000 members and supporters in Oregon. Thank you for allowing my brief comments today.

The Oregon Chapter has serious concerns about House Bills 2624 and 3395. We believe that these bills are unnecessary and are counter to the will of the voters of Oregon. However, I would first like to point out that the Sierra Club is decidedly not opposed to hunting and is not "anti-hunter," as you are likely to hear today. Our organization has many hunters in our ranks and we have supported and been a part of previous revisions to the state's Cougar Management Plan. Indeed, we decided this session not to oppose HB 2390, which would extend of the sunset of ODFW's program to authorize agents to use dogs in bear and cougar hunting in certain circumstances. The fact that that bill is now moving forward in the Legislature is one reason we believe HB 2624 and HB 3395 are unnecessary.

Furthermore, ODFW's own numbers show that complaints about cougars to the agency is about the same as it was 20 years ago, while the number of cougars killed in the state has more than doubled. And given the important role that large predators such as cougars play in the ecosystem, we believe their management must be closely monitored so as not to deplete their numbers too far. And again, ODFW already has programs in place and the comprehensive 2006 Cougar Management Plan, so we believe the added measures contemplated by HB 2624 and HB 3395 are not necessary.

Finally, as you all know well, the voters of the State of Oregon have twice spoken on the issue of hunting cougars with dogs and both times have rejected the practice as something available to the general public. We believe that the will of the voters across the state should be honored, especially when we already have programs in place which we believe are adequate to deal with cougars in our state. In conclusion, the Oregon Chapter of the Sierra Club believes that House Bills 2624 and 3395 are unnecessary and will ultimately be harmful to our state's wildlife. We urge Committee members to oppose this bill. Thank you very much for the opportunity to provide this testimony.