

May 22, 2013

Subject: Testimony in Support of HB 2624A

Chair Dingfelder and Members of the Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee

I am Joe Ricker, representing the Oregon Hunters Association. I am here today to support HB2624A. I am not here to advocate for the removal of all or even a large part of the cougar population. I am here to advocate for a managed approach to scientific management of all wildlife in Oregon.

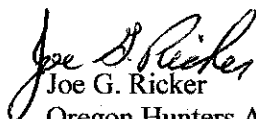
It is time the ability of Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) to effectively manage cougars to be restored in those counties that choose to do so. Wildlife management is not a one size fits all proposition. What can and should be used in a rural county may not fit into the urban environment. This bill only provides for those counties most affected socially and economically to be able to decide the rules that will be used to manage wildlife in their county. It does not turn wildlife management over to individual counties; it continues to place wildlife management in the hands of ODFW.

I am sure you will or have heard the arguments that claim to be science-based. With a little research and reading "research" can be found to support a variety of positions on cougar management.

In closing there are a few points that I would like to highlight.

1. Big game herds are declining in Oregon. [Deer & elk harvest has dropped roughly in half since Measure 18 passed.]
  - a. Rocky Mountain Elk: 16 of 33 Wildlife Management Units (WMU) are below Management Objective (MO)
  - b. Roosevelt Elk: 18 of 20 WMU are below MO.
2. Cougar numbers are increasing in Oregon. [Their numbers have roughly doubled since Measure 18 passed.]
  - a. 1961 population 214. a. 1994 population 3114. b. 2005 population 5101
  - b. 2012 population 5948
3. The burden for management of wildlife in Oregon is a fee-based system with sportsmen and their activities covering the bulk of the costs.
4. The economic impact of rural counties is evident along with the decline of wildlife. The average hunter spent \$2,484 in 2011.

OHA supports this bill and encourage you to schedule a work session on this bill and move it to the floor of the Senate. This is an opportunity to wildlife management back in the hands of Oregon's professionals in ODFW.

  
Joe G. Ricker

Oregon Hunters Association  
Chairman of the Board