

**Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation**  
5705 Grant Creek  
Missoula, MT 59808

May 22, 2013

Subject: Testimony before the Oregon Senate Natural Resources Committee in support of HB 2624A

Chair Dingfelder and members of the Committee:

My name is David Wiley. I live in Sublimity, Oregon. I am a volunteer for the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and today I am here to speak on behalf of the Elk Foundation.

The Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation requests the Natural Resources Committee send HB 2624A to the Senate for a vote.

The mission of the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation is to ensure the future of elk, other wildlife, their habitat and our hunting heritage. The RMEF is committed to conserving, restoring and enhancing natural habitats; promoting the sound management of wild elk, which may be hunted or otherwise enjoyed. RMEF has more than 16,000 members in Oregon and 197,000 members nationwide.

The Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation absolutely supports employing the best science in management of all our wildlife species. It follows that the Elk Foundation fully supports the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife in the execution of its mission to manage all wildlife for the use and enjoyment of all Oregonians.

Cougars are a large and very secretive carnivore. Cougars prey primarily on deer and elk. Because they are large animals they must eat a lot. Cougars occasionally depredate domestic livestock and animals. They are very territorial. Occasionally they get to close to humans for comfort.

Managing predator and prey populations is a difficult task for ODFW when all the "tools" are available. That the job can be successfully accomplished is evidenced by the Department's successful restoration of a healthy cougar population. In 1961 Oregon had an estimated 214 cougar and by 1994 the population was estimated at a health 3114 cougars. This increase in the cougar population was accomplished while the use of dogs to hunt cougars was a legal method. I must also point out that deer and elk populations were also increasing concurrent with the cougar population.

In 1994 Measure 18 removed a critical "tool" from the cougar management toolbox of ODFW, the use of dogs by licensed hunters. In 2012 ODFW estimated the cougar population at 5948. The Oregon deer and elk populations which peaked in the late 1990s are now in decline. In 2012 ODFW reports Rocky Mountain Elk populations in 16 of 33 wildlife management units below Management Objective, and Roosevelt Elk populations in 18 of 20 units below management objective. To be fair to the cougar and other predators, loss of quality habitat is likely a contributor to the decline, but predators are certainly a part of the problem.

Returning the use of dogs as a legal method of cougar hunting is critical to the management of deer and elk populations in Oregon. A balance must be established between predator and prey for the benefit of all Oregonians.

Please send HB 2624A to the Senate floor for a vote by the full Senate.

Thank you

David Wiley, Agency Planning Team Leader, RMEF – Oregon, 430 NW Hartmann Ave, Sublimity, OR 97385, telephone (503) 767-4901