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February 13, 2013

The Honorable Brad Witt, Chair
House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee
900 Court St NE, H-374
Salem, OR, 97301

RE: HB 2390 – Removal of Sunset Authorizing ODFW to Appoint Agents to use Hounds - Oppose

Dear Representative Witt:

On behalf of the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and our more than 2.5 million members and supporters nationwide, including more than 25,000 Oregon residents, I wish to register our opposition to HB 2390. HB 2390 would remove the sunset date on provisions that allow the Department of Fish and Wildlife to appoint individuals as agents of the state for the purpose of using dogs to hunt black bear or cougar.

As you are aware, the ban on hunting cougars and black bears with dogs stems from the passage of Measure 18 by Oregon voters in 1994. Since the time of Measure 18's enactment efforts have been undertaken to weaken the will Oregon voters exercised 19 years ago, none more so than the enactment of the state's Cougar Management Plan in 2006 and the subsequent passage of HB 2971 in 2007.

The Cougar Management Plan allows the taking of roughly 40% of the cougar population and increased the cougar hunting season to encompass the entire year. The plan was widely criticized by cougar biologists when it was proposed and has continued to be criticized for its over-estimation of cougar populations and for its singular focus on the lethal taking of cougars. In 2006, the same year the Plan was adopted, Oregon saw more cougars taken than in any other previous year. Despite this fact, the Legislature adopted HB 2971 in 2007 to authorize the state to appoint private agents to use hounds to track and take even more cougars.

Biologists surmise that the taking of so many cougars offers more risk for human/cougar interaction as younger more inexperienced cougars fill the void left by these takings. In fact the takings allowed under the Management Plan and HB 2971 are likely causing more harm than good.

For these reasons, we strongly oppose HB 2390's removal of the sunset date authorizing the state to appoint agents to use dogs to track and take black bear and cougars.

If you have any questions about the ASPCA's position, please feel free to contact me at Kevin.oneill@aspca.org or 916.214.0476. Thank you for your time in considering our position.

Sincerely,



Kevin O'Neill
Senior Legislative Director, Western Region

cc: The Honorable Sal Esquivel, Vice Chair
The Honorable Caddy McKeown, Vice Chair
The Honorable Brian Clem
The Honorable Wayne Krieger
The Honorable Jeff Reardon
The Honorable Jim Thompson
The Honorable Ben Unger
The Honorable Gail Whitsett