

Dear House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee,

We are opposed to HB2390 which would continue the provision allowing Oregon Department of Wildlife to appoint hunters to act as agents of the state to kill cougars and bears using bait and hound hunting. Both those hunting practices were twice prohibited by Oregon voters for use by sport hunters. Both those practices are, however, allowed for protection of public safety and/or for livestock damage.

HB2390 puts the agents in the field to implement the bear and cougar management plans. In this case, these agents will not be used to remove cougars when they occasionally cause damage to livestock or property. Instead these agents are used to implement the cougar management plan target areas. The agents are used to kill every and any cougar they find within a circumscribed 'target area', using packs of hounds and snares. These are not animals with a history of causing conflicts. They are targeted for 'removal' because they inhabit an area in prime hunting territory for elk and deer. Removing natural predators increases the opportunity for sport hunters. The target areas are located in remote areas of the state in the following hunt units: Ukiah, Warner, Steens, Wenaha. Fifty cougars were killed last year in the 4 target areas. I have not found any budget information on the cost to operate the program for the year. There may be a fiscal element to this bill.

Cougar mortality has rarely been higher in the history of Oregon. See attached statistics from ODFW. More than double the number of cougars were killed in 2012 than in 1993 before passage of measure 18.

We oppose Hb2390 because it contradicts current scientific theory that demonstrates high rates of hunting cause greater risk to the public and livestock. Findings of over 20 years of field research on cougars in Washington state show that indiscriminate and heavy hunting creates situations of increased conflicts by favoring juvenile age cats, the age class known to cause problems. Although there has never been a documented cougar attack or fatality in Oregon, adding to the small risk of attack further by promoting the killing of yet more cougars flies in the face of the precautionary principle.

Please do not support HIB2390 and perpetuate a flawed cougar management plan by supplying agents (see attached critique of the cougar plan's last review).

Please do not support HB2390 and undermine the will of the voters by overturning Measure 18.

Please do not support HB2390 and put the public at greater risk of cougar attack.

Thank you for your attention and time,

Sally Mackler  
Oregon Carnivore Representative

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