

April 15, 2015

Dear Oregon House Agriculture & Natural Resources Committee Members:

We encourage you to **reject HB 2050, 3140, 3188, 3514, and 3515.**

Regarding HB 2050:

In 1994, Oregon voters approved Measure 18 which prohibited the sport hunting of bears and cougars with hounds. A subsequent combination of unfounded fear and intense political pressure resulted in the liberalization of cougar hunting regulations which more than doubled the cougar mortality rate in the span of 17 years. The States "Cougar Management Plan", adopted in 2006, has been heavily criticized by independent scientists for its reliance on incomplete/inaccurate data and use of flawed population models. It is founded on the unproven perception that Oregon's cougar populations have increased dramatically and that additional "management", involving the lethal removal of healthy animals by "agents" using traps and/or hounds, is required to keep populations under control.

Since Measure 18's adoption, several attempts to overturn it have been made. All have been unsuccessful. Oregon voters have made it crystal clear that they do not approve of sport hunting for cougars and bears when hounds are involved.

House Bill 2050 represents an all-too-transparent "end run" around Measure 18 by allowing voters to decide the issue for their county of residence. Presumably, proponents of the bill assume that such an arrangement would result in the ban being overturned in the more rural/politically conservative counties. While the desired outcome might very well occur, it would clearly violate the will of Oregon's voting *majority*. The subject resources belong to all Oregonians, irrespective of where they happen to reside, and they have spoken.

Rather than expending limited public resources attempting to subvert the will of Oregonians we submit that a far more constructive approach would be for the Legislature to provide the ODFW with the funding necessary to improve their research, monitoring and evaluation (RM&E) program for cougars. Presently, the agency's RM&E program is severely under funded/staffed and thus incapable of conducting the kind of population specific analyses critical to sound cougar management.

Regarding HB 3140 and 3188:

Increased emphasis on predator control is a waste of public resources. It has been scientifically demonstrated that the increased killing of predators only exacerbates the perceived problem(s) as the targeted predator population typically responds to the persecution by increasing reproduction amongst its remaining individuals. Increased litter size requires more and bigger prey to meet the predator's needs.

Oregon's present system of predator control (e.g. Wildlife Services) leaves much to be desired. Clearly, adding additional infrastructure to this already flawed system would be ill-advised.

Regarding HB 3514:

Under the present system, ranchers are already adequately compensated for losses to wolves. Allocation of additional public resources is unwarranted.

Regarding HB 3515:

It is critical that Oregon's fragile and vulnerable wolf populations continue to receive protection under the State's ESA. With fewer than 80 individuals, loss of this protection will most certainly increase the likelihood of a future re-listing. Oregonians have emphatically demonstrated their desire for Oregon's wolves to thrive, not just barely hang on. Loss of ESA protection would result in a severe compromising of the wolf population's gene pool diversity.

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