



OREGON HUNTERS ASSOCIATION

Protecting Oregon's Wildlife, Habitat and Hunting Heritage

P.O. Box 1706, Medford, OR 97501 • (541) 772-7313
oha@oregonhunters.org • oregonhunters.org

February 19, 2019

Testimony in Support of HB 2795 – Cougar Bill

For the record I am Jim Akenson, Conservation Director of the Oregon Hunters Association. This testimony is in support of HB 2795, a bill designed to more effectively manage Oregon's cougar population. Personally, I have spent many years as a researcher of cougars in both Oregon and Idaho, and I was actively involved in the Catherine Creek Cougar Study for ODFW when ballot measure 18 outlawed the use of dogs for cougar hunting in 1994. It was no surprise to us, who understood cougar biology, how this species expanded throughout the state in just a couple of decades once the dog ban was applied to hunting them. They are a very difficult animal to hunt without the use of dogs.

Today, with a burgeoning cougar population, it is extremely difficult to manage this species without the more efficient tool of using dogs to tree cougars prior to killing them. Oregon has an estimated population of 6,400 cougars, and roughly 14,000 people hunting cougars (without dog) and harvesting from 250 to 300 cats per year, this only equals a harvest rate of 4 percent, which is not enough to even flatten the ever-rising cougar population curve. We simply need a new approach!

The pilot program described in HB 2795 is very strategic, by balancing an urgent management need, while giving consideration for the original dog use ban from the mid-1990's. Twelve Oregon counties which, have robust cougar populations, would have the opportunity for special cougar management areas. The effect of these actions will reduce human safety threats, lessen livestock depredations, and reduce predation rates on hunter-revered game animals, specifically deer and elk.

The dog use within HB 2795 also allows for educating cougars away from people and their pets and livestock. I have personal experience using dog pursuit for this purpose. The repeated pursuing and treeing of cougars can be an effective way to move them away from undesirable places, such as the Grande Ronde Hospital parking lot on the edge of La Grande. During the winter of 1993 we successfully deterred a cougar away from a place with obvious human safety concerns.

Oregon cannot afford to have another cougar caused human fatality like the one last fall on Mount Hood. Let's be responsible wildlife managers, and human safety advocates, and approve HB 2795!