

In all of North America there have only been about 27 fatal cougar attacks in the past 100 years. The attack on Diana Bober last fall is the only reported death or attack by a cougar in the wild in Oregon history. That such incidents are extremely rare doesn't make Diana Bober's death less tragic. This is a terribly tragic death; it is very disturbing to think something like this would happen.

There may be more sightings and encounters with cougars not because they can't be hunted with dogs, but because of loss of habitat that pushes them into more contact with populated areas. The extreme rarity of incidents involving cougars is actually a testament to how well these animals co-exist with humans. Compare the CDC reports that about 20 people are killed *each year* by cows and about 25 or so are killed *each year* by dogs. Insurance company and National Highway Traffic Safety Administration statistics show deer cause about 200 human deaths and \$1.1-3 billion in damage *each year*. There is no plan, of course, to allow hunters to wipe out or dramatically lower the populations of deer, cows, or dogs.

Hunters have presented this plan to use dogs to hunt cougars as some sort of public service. But, of course, this is somehow more fun for them, a badge of honor to "bag" a cougar. There is absolutely **no** scientific or other evidence even to suggest that hunting more cougars will somehow prevent another such incident. In fact, the research shows that increased hunting with cougars will only make them more dangerous to humans and farm animals. Hunting is random, taking out cougars with no consideration as to their role in the social order or territory. Hunting will greatly disrupt the cougars' complex social order and territoriality. Young males, for example, may be left without the training they need or take over an area previously dominated by an older male killed by hunters and that may cause fighting or other chaos. Cubs or kittens may be left without their mothers.

Before you do anything, at least review the research of Rob Wielgus, former director of the Large Carnivore Conservation Lab at Washington State University, which showed hunting cougars can actually cause more unwanted encounters with humans or domestic farm animals. Other research has supported his conclusions. Today Washington state manages for the social stability of the cougar, something that cannot be done with hunting and certainly not with hunting with dogs.

Also, using dogs to hunt cougars is a form of animal fighting prohibited by O.R. Statutes Sec. 167.355. There is no question dogs used this way will be seriously injured or killed; cougars will also be unnecessarily injured. It is cruel and inhumane; it has nothing to do with public safety and everything to do with entertaining hunters. As with dog fighting and cockfighting, hunting cougars with dogs should remain illegal. Please vote NO on H.B. 2795.

It may be easy to dismiss my testimony, claiming I don't live in one of the affected counties. But all Oregonians have an interest in the state's wildlife, wherever they are. The stability of the cougar population in the named counties affects the entire state's ecosystem. All Oregonians have a right to speak up to protect cougars and dogs, wherever they are in the state, from cruel and inhumane treatment.

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