



Date: February 20th, 2019

To: House Committee on Natural Resources
House Representative Brad Witt, Chair

From: Sharon Harmon
President and CEO, Oregon Humane Society

Re: House Bill 2795

Established in 1868, the Oregon Humane Society is the state's largest and oldest animal welfare organization with over 50,000 supporters statewide. We are not affiliated with any local or national organization. **We are here today to ask you to oppose HB 2795.**

Polls indicate that cougars are highly admired by Oregonians as powerful creatures that play a vital role as a top predator in a fragile ecosystem¹. Many other wildlife species are dependent on the nourishment provided by cougar kills from beetles to bears and even bald eagles and the fate of these species will be at the mercy of the overkill that trophy hunting of cougars can cause².

Cougars are sentient beings that possess a complex social structure many can appreciate. Kittens are raised upwards of two years by their mothers and many die from starvation or predation when they become orphaned because one or more of their parents have been killed by trophy hunting³.

Research shows that trophy hunting cougars is counterintuitive to protecting people and livestock and actually can increase problems when older males are removed from the population by

¹ Kelly A. George et al., "Changes in Attitudes toward Animals in the United States from 1978 to 2014," *Biological Conservation* 201 (9// 2016), <http://dx.doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.biocon.2016.07.013>; National Report from the research project entitled "America's Wildlife Values", *America's Wildlife Values: The Social Context of Wildlife Management in the U.S.*, by M. J. Manfredi et al. (Fort Collins, Colorado: Colorado State University, Department of Natural Resources, 2018).

² L. Mark Elbroch et al., "Vertebrate Diversity Benefiting from Carrion Provided by Pumas and Other Subordinate, Apex Felids," *Biological Conservation* 215, no. Supplement C (2017/11/01/ 2017), <http://dx.doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.biocon.2017.08.026>.

³ L. M. Elbroch, "Pumas: Solitary but Social?," *Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment* 15, no. 3 (Apr 2017), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/fee.1479>; L. Mark Elbroch et al., "Adaptive Social Strategies in a Solitary Carnivore," *Science Advances* 3, no. 10 (2017), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1126/sciadv.1701218>; L. M. Elbroch and H. Quigley, "Observations of Wild Cougar (Puma Concolor) Kittens with Live Prey: Implications for Learning and Survival," *Canadian Field-Naturalist* 126, no. 4 (Oct-Dec 2012), <Go to ISI>://WOS:000320973400008; L. Mark Elbroch and Howard Quigley, "Social Interactions in a Solitary Carnivore," *Current Zoology* (2016-07-09 00:00:00 2016), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/cz/zow080>.



hunters and replaced by younger males that are mostly responsible for the rare negative encounters that have occurred between cougars and people⁴.

The use of hounds in trophy hunting cougars is cruel and inhumane to all parties involved. As a predator species, it is probable that, instead of fleeing, a cougar will choose to defend itself against the pursuing dog which, akin to animal fighting, can lead to a barbaric end to one or both of the animals involved.

In conclusion, the risk to the hounds and other species involved in this inhumane practice is far too great. As cougars are forced out of their natural habitats by human development, there are other, less savage management solutions to explore rather than being subjected to a brutal and antiquated hunting technique. The future of a healthy ecosystem for both humans and animals alike is at stake.

Please vote 'no' for HB 2795.

Sincerely,

Sharon Harmon
President and CEO, Oregon Humane Society
sharon@oregonhumane.org
(503) 416-2992

⁴ <https://www.opb.org/news/article/cougar-overhunting-conflict-oregon/>