



OREGON HUNTERS ASSOCIATION

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Testimony on HB-3118 Paul Donheffner, Legislative Committee Chair

OHA is in strong support of HB-3118. We have discussed cougar management in several bills this session, but finding a way forward has been problematic to say the least. Ideally, we could find a way to bring back hunting with dogs, but that is unlikely this session. Which is truly unfortunate.

The only way to effectively control cougars is hunting with dogs. Ask ODFW, ask any wildlife biologist who has studied cougars, and they will tell you that this is the only effective way to limit numbers. We have a population of over 6,400 cougars and rising. Even when every hunter carries a cougar tag, the harvest number is only 250-300 a year, which doesn't slow the population one bit. As more and more cougars spread out in search of food, they're moving into neighborhoods where they don't belong.

OHA is supporting HB-3118 because it is a pragmatic approach, using one of the few management tools available. Current law allows the use of ODFW agents to take cougars with dogs.

This bill uses that tool to try to fill the cougar quotas statewide. There are several zones where quotas are not filled each year. The bill directs ODFW to use agents to better hit the quota targets. Even when filled, overall cougar population numbers will continue to increase, but at least we slow the growth rate a little more.

HB-3118 moves the needle ever so slightly in the right direction.

OHA is in full support and requests that you advance this bill as a small step forward by allowing ODFW to be more effective in using agents to manage cougar populations statewide.