

April 4, 2019

Attn: House Committee on Natural Resources

RE: HB 3118 – Cougar Bill -- SUPPORT

This letter is in support of HB 3118. This bill is designed to renew the use of hound agents to effectively manage Oregon's cougar population under guidance of ODFW. Given Oregon's expanding cougar population this bill is essential for protecting people, their property (pets/livestock) and maintaining deer and elk populations in our state that can allow for hunter harvest.

The following bullet points are key reasons to endorse this bill:

- Oregon's current cougar population estimate is well over 6,000 cougars, and they now occupy all regions of the state. This estimate has DOUBLED since 1994 when hounds were banned as a hunting tool for cougars and black bear.
- Currently it takes the effort of 14,000 hunters, with cougar tags, to harvest 300 cats. This is barely 4% of the population estimate, and not enough to flatten the ever-rising population curve.
- HB 3118 very strategically provides a management need while still respecting the dog-use ban of the mid-1990's. Agents are well vetted and thoroughly informed to understand their role as critical, skilled, assistants to ODFW.
- The bill gives ODFW District Biologists a tool with which they can reduce a burgeoning cougar population – particularly in places with high occurrences of livestock loss or human safety threats. Thus, potentially alleviating tragic events such as the cougar caused fatality that happened last fall on Mt. Hood, the fatality in Washington state and increasingly in other western states.
- Using dogs in pursuit of cougars can also move them from unwanted areas where they might be tempted to cause problems, as witnessed in Bend just a few months ago.
- Having a pool of hound agents also allows for population monitoring and research on cougars for capture, marking, and radio-collaring.

The effect of this bill will be to reduce human safety threats, lessen livestock depredations, and reduce predation rates on hunter-revered game animals, specifically deer, elk and bighorn sheep. Oregon cannot afford to have another cougar caused human fatality like the one last fall on Mount Hood. ODFW is the responsible wildlife management agency and human safety advocates. Approve HB 3118.

Respectfully Submitted,

Karl J. Findling
Owner, Oregon Pack Works

Life Member Oregon Hunters, Backcountry Hunters and Anglers and Traditional Archers of Oregon