

Submitter: Samuel Williams
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Natural Resources and
Wildfire
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB769

I support SB 769 because it gives us a chance to protect the balance between cougar populations and other wildlife—like mule deer and elk—without imposing a blanket policy on every county. I've grown up hunting and fishing across Oregon for 45 years, and I've witnessed how our deer herds - particularly mule deer - are in real decline. I graduated from Oregon State University with a Fisheries and Wildlife degree. Although I do not practice in the field for my occupation, I pay close attention to management efforts. Current cougar management efforts seem largely ineffective, given that thousands of tags are issued annually but yield very few harvested cougars. I believe the single largest threat to mule deer populations is cougar predation. That opinion is based on reading all of the research put out out by the ODFW and other sources. I also believe we are underestimating our cougar counts in this state. Allowing counties to decide for themselves whether to permit hound hunting can help tailor solutions to local conditions. I find it sensible for rural counties with active cougar conflicts to have the option of using proven, selective methods to manage these predators. I'm a firm believer in responsible hunting practices, and hound hunting, when regulated, can be both humane and practical. I am not a hound hunter nor do I plan to be one. Most hound hunters have been hound hunting for 3+ generations. By restoring hound hunting by county we can honor that tradition for those families while protecting the ungulate populations in our state. If we continue to leave things as they are, the ungulate population will continue to decline while the cougar population continues to increase leading to crisis and more human cougar conflicts. We need to protect the ecology of this system. This is not a partisan issue. This is an ecological management issue. We need to manage our wildlife to meet objectives for all species in this state. SB 769 is a great step in the right direction in looking out for our diverse wildlife.