

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

I'm writing in support of SB 769 because I value well-managed wildlife populations and believe that local communities should have the power to shape policies that affect them directly. In my view, Oregon's current approach to cougar management is not working as intended. We issue a large number of cougar tags every year, yet we see very little impact on cougar densities. Meanwhile, rural residents report more and more cougar sightings around homes and livestock. Declining deer and elk herds further illustrate the imbalance. In the past, regulated hound hunting allowed for more precise harvests and helped maintain a balance among predators and prey. By empowering counties to make this choice, SB 769 neither forces hound hunting on those who don't want it nor leaves those who do want it without a legal avenue. I think that's the most equitable way to address this complicated issue. Cougars are a treasured part of Oregon's landscape, but their population needs to be managed responsibly, and this bill provides a framework for doing just that.