

Submitter: Linda Bierly
On Behalf Of: myself
Committee: Senate Committee On Natural Resources and
Wildfire
Measure, Appointment or
Topic: SB769

As an Oregonian, I strongly urge you to oppose SB 769. This bill would overturn the will of the voters, who have already shown where they stand on this issue—twice. Oregonians are opposed to the hunting of cougars with hounds and want to keep their protections in place.

Cougars are top predators and their presence has a healthy cascade effect on ecosystems. Conversely, their removal has a detrimental effect on ecosystem health. OSU Ecologists William Ripple and Robert Beschta studied the role of cougars in the ecosystems of Zion and Yosemite National Parks. Their research found that the disappearance of cougars from these parks led to significant ecological changes.

Research findings:

Cougars are important top predators: Cougars are key predators that help maintain healthy ecosystems.

Human activity scares away cougars: As human visitation to the parks increased, cougars were driven away.

Mule deer populations increase: Without cougars to keep their numbers in check, mule deer populations grew and over-browsed vegetation.

Cottonwood trees decline: The over-browsing of cottonwood trees by mule deer reduced the regeneration of these trees.

Bank erosion increases: The loss of vegetation led to more erosion along stream banks.

Wildlife and plant abundance declines: The loss of vegetation led to a decline in the abundance of wildlife and plants.