

TO: Senate Natural Resources and Wildfire Committee
DATE: February 10, 2025
SUBJECT: SB 769

I am writing to oppose SB 769. Oregonians passed Measure 18 in 1994 to prohibit hunting cougars with hounds and reaffirmed that desire with another vote in 1996. While the Oregon cougar population has doubled since then, it is not because the population is out of control, but rather, has increased to occupy available habitat and prey base, indicating a healthy population in balance with available resources.

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife currently has effective means to manage cougars through Cougar Target Areas and partnership with Wildlife Services that address cougar impacts on big game populations, property and human safety. There is a large body of scientific evidence — including some conducted by ODFW — that shows cougar hunting with hounds increases cougar-human conflicts because large males are more likely to be selected and killed by hunters. This opens their territory to younger males that are more likely to have conflicts with humans.

In addition, simply killing more cougars ignores the science of predator-prey relationships and the concept of additive versus compensatory mortality — whether big game killed by predators affects their population. It is a key principle that wildlife managers use to responsibly and scientifically manage large carnivore populations in balance with other wildlife species. Randomly killing more cougars, the majority of which are not causing problems, will do nothing to reduce cougar-human conflicts or impacts on big game.

Oregonians value cougars, do not want them hunted with hounds anywhere in the state and have indicated so twice at the ballot box. And they certainly didn't intend for individual counties to "opt out" if they didn't want to comply with the law.

Sincerely,

Jim Yuskavitch
Sisters, OR