

Chair Golden, Vice Chair Nash and Members of the Committee,

I am writing in support of SB 769. I have been reviewing opposing testimony, and it is important to establish some basic definitions before speaking about this subject.

Trophy hunting: This means one thing to hunters and another thing to anti-hunting groups who use the term in their rhetoric. For people who use the term in a disparaging way, it means to kill an animal for its skull or hide.

Guess what, if you take a managed game species and do not harvest the meat to the best of your ability, then you are practicing what is known as wonton waste in our state game regulations and you are POACHING and you are not a hunter you are a POACHER. Poaching is illegal in Oregon and every other state in the nation.

For hunters, we do hunt for trophies including skulls and hides but it is secondary to the intended harvest of meat, and it is always in a legal . To a hunter, trophy hunting is being more selective of the animal you choose to take, and to look for those antlers or hides that you wish to keep as a memento of that hunt and the time and effort you put into that hunt. Keep in mind, some elk units can take up to 20 years to secure a hunting tag. Yes, you might be a little selective on that hunt to find your “trophy” antlered bull elk. No matter what we do as hunters, we do it legally and ethically. When we use the term trophy, it is not in the same manner that anti-hunting groups use in their rhetoric.

Hound Hunting: This is an incredibly difficult and time-consuming practice that should not be characterized as a lazy or unethical method of hunting predators. Hound hunters are more familiar with their quarry than most any other type of hunter I know of. The exception to that might be trappers. They also spend an unparalleled amount of time with their working dogs to train them to locate, track and tree the animals they are in search of. Hound hunting is not loosing untrained dogs to locate, chase down and kill mountain lions indiscriminately in some free for all. Again, THAT is poaching.

Hunting in general: The reality of hunting is that you do not kill an animal every time you go hunting. Hunting is challenging. For me, that is a huge part of why I do it. Oregon’s hunters take the concepts of fair chase and ethical hunting extremely seriously. I recognize that we are a minority, and speaking to someone who isn’t a hunter about these concepts is often challenging. Heck, I felt weird about hunting before I tried it. In truth my respect and even LOVE for wildlife grew beyond what I expected after spending just a few seasons of looking for them on public land in their domain. Wildlife don’t have the option to go sit on the couch, they are in the wild at all times. They are amazingly tough and resilient creatures. If you want to be a successful hunter, you have to match that. Try hunting for a few seasons and see if that changes your opinion on this matter in any way.

Okay, on to the reason I support this bill:

I *believe* allowing hound hunting of mountain lions would actually reduce human and mountain lion conflict. If I am not mistaken, this is a stated goal of this legislature body and ODFW. In both Oregon and Washington, from my admittedly armchair perspective, there have been upticks in mountain lion and human attacks along with booming populations of the animal in both states.

When hunters are in the woods during hunting seasons for elk, deer or bear, the animals become keenly aware of the threat that you are. It is a remarkable thing, but animals are smart, and they do learn. If you were to allow hound hunting for mountain lions, I hypothesize the animals would become aware of the smells and sounds of dogs and people and likely be far less inclined to interact with either one at any time of the year. I am not saying this would end all negative interactions, but I think it would help.

Additional reasons I support this bill:

The current data on populations in Oregon show a very stable and upwardly growing healthy population of mountain lions. <https://myodfw.com/articles/living-cougars#:~:text=Oregon%20is%20home%20to%20more,ll%20rarely%20see%20a%20cougar.>

Mule deer and some elk herds are on their hind legs so to speak population wise. They are not doing well, and I believe ODFW has indicated that mountain lion and other predators are part of the challenge to recovering populations, although habitat connectivity is probably the biggest factor. SO why not see if this helps?

James Adkins

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Lifelong democrat(yeah that's right)