

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

I am writing to share my support for SB 769 because it would restore local control over cougar management in Oregon. I've seen firsthand how different regions in our state face distinct challenges when it comes to wildlife populations. Some areas rarely encounter cougars, while rural counties often see them around livestock, homes, and even schools. In an area outside Wallowa, for example, I personally saw 5 cougars in one year between turkey and elk season. This bill would simply allow each county to choose whether to permit hound hunting, without forcing anyone to adopt the practice. I believe this flexible approach is more fair than a statewide, one-size-fits-all rule, and will allow a custom-fit approach for certain units with a clear abundance of cougars. As a turkey caller, I now primarily carry a rifle myself for incidental cougar contact, as I am primarily calling turkeys for youths and first-time hunters as an introduction to hunting. This is actually the only way I have harvested a cougar - having intercepted a cougar on the way to a gobbling Tom. Beyond my personal experience, this also respects the voices of other local voters who know the conditions on the ground. Respectfully, I strongly urge this move forward to a balanced wildlife management strategy that recognizes Oregon's diversity.