

Dear Honorable Members of the Senate,

I am writing to express my strong support for Oregon Senate Bill SB 769, which proposes the legalization of cougar hunting with hounds. This bill is a vital step toward restoring balance to Oregon's ecosystems, particularly benefiting our elk and mule deer populations. As a hunter, and conservationist, I believe that this measure will help mitigate the negative effects of uncontrolled cougar populations on our state's wildlife.

Cougars are apex predators, and while they play an important role in maintaining ecological balance, their populations in Oregon have reached levels that threaten the sustainability of certain wildlife species - especially elk and mule deer. Cougars rely heavily on these species as their primary prey and as their populations grow, so does the pressure on vulnerable deer and elk herds.

In recent years, the overabundance of cougars has led to significant declines in mule deer and elk numbers, particularly in certain areas of the state. In regions where cougar numbers are high, the competition for food

resources have become unsustainable for deer and elk, leading to weakened populations. The cumulative effects of predation, especially on young and vulnerable animals, jeopardize the health of these herds and disrupt the balance of local ecosystems.

Cougar hunting with hounds offers a targeted and efficient method for managing cougar populations. This practice allows wildlife managers and hunters to identify and remove problem animals, ensuring that cougar numbers remain in balance with the available prey. By controlling cougar populations, we can provide relief to the struggling elk and mule deer herds, improving their chances of recovery and long-term survival. Reducing the cougar population through regulated hunting with hounds will directly decrease the predation pressure on deer and elk. This will give these species a better chance to reproduce and maintain sustainable population levels.

Preventing overgrazing and habitat degradation with healthier deer and elk populations, ecosystems will see improvements in vegetation regeneration. These herbivores play a role in shaping landscapes, and when their numbers are too low, it can lead to overgrowth of vegetation that disrupts other wildlife species and the entire habitat. By utilizing hounds, hunters can help target specific animals, reducing the overall cougar population without negatively impacting other wildlife species. By ensuring that cougar numbers do not surpass the capacity

of their prey, Oregon can maintain a healthy predator-prey relationship that benefits all species involved.

SB 769 is a critical piece of legislation that will allow for the targeted management of cougar populations through regulated hunting with hounds. By supporting this bill, the Oregon State Senate will be taking an important step toward preserving the future of our elk and mule deer populations, maintaining balanced ecosystems, and ensuring that Oregon remains a leader in wildlife conservation. I urge you to pass SB 769 and support this necessary and effective wildlife management tool. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Michael Pesicka