

HB 2068A

Topic: Increases percentage of nonresident tags issued for hunting of black bear and cougar within particular area that may be issued by drawing. Increases percentage of nonresident tags issued for hunting of black bear,] **and** cougar *and antelope*] within particular area that may be issued by drawing.

I am opposed to HB 2068 A for the following reasons:

1. We do not have an accurate cougar model population count. According to page 51 of ODFW's 2017 cougar management plan, we have approximately 3,300 adult cougars. The balance is cougar kittens, day 0 up to 2 years. Due to the high mortality rate of young wildlife, Fish and Game agencies do not count them in their population model counts. ODFW does not include the young deer and elk in their model population counts. ODFW does include the cougar kitten in the adult population model count. However, ODFW does not count cougar kitten mortality in their quota or harvest counts. **"Sound management of large carnivore populations in wildland-urban environments requires accurate information regarding the ecology of these populations and factors contributing to their interactions with people** (Kertson et al. page 1)." It also demands an accurate population model count. Before we continue with any new hunting plans, we must improve on ODFW's cougar management plan and model population count. I have attached the Washington State's cougar management plan and articles they used to design their program. I ask that they are presented in this testimony for public viewing and education.
2. ODFW realizes that killing more cougar causes more cougar conflict issues with livestock and humans. Increased hunting that HB 2068 A requires will increase cougar conflict issues for Oregonians. Washington State has mitigated their conflict issues by using **"Management strategies that target problem individuals and maintain older age structures in local populations coupled with proactive landscape planning and public education in residential areas at the wildland-urban interface may provide an effective strategy for decreasing cougar-human interaction** (Kertson et al. page 1)." I would further suggest the public and Senate read relatively new research on the elements of "problem individuals" and what constitutes their behavior. Reference: <http://gabradshaw.com/about/>
3. Washington State's cougar management plan has designed a program that includes the well-being of their citizens and the ecologies that sustain them. The foundations of their plan started with a statewide survey of citizen and stakeholder responses and willingness to co-exist with the cougar. I have received a research proposal for a statewide Oregon cougar survey from the company Washington State used, Responsive Management. Their quote for \$35,000 is

attached. With the help of this survey, and rigorous hallmarks of science, Washington designed a plan that states the following:

“In our opinion, of equal importance is recognizing the ecological and evolutionary role of cougar in the trophic hierarchy (Estes et al. 2011); and incorporating this concept into management and education elevates the cougar’s status beyond a mere predator (Washington Cougar Management Plan page 8)”.

And therein is the success of their plan. Moreover, California does not even have a cougar management plan, and they are experiencing less conflict issues than Oregon, and fewer overhead to manage the cougar. California has more cougar than Oregon, more livestock, and more people. Since 1972, there has been no funding for hunting cougar in California, or a cougar management plan. In place of hunting and a plan, is a statewide effort to understand the cougar. University involvement includes extensive research by Dr. Seth Riley who is a National Park Service urban wildlife expert for Griffin Park and Ventura County. The famous L.A. cougar P22 is part of his study area. U.C. Davis Dr. Winston Vectors manages the Santa Monica cougar research project. Dr. Chris W. Wilmers operates the Orange County San Diego cougar research lab at the University of California, Santa Cruz.

Oregon, California incident and public safety comparisons. These comparative stats indicate that killing more cougar creates more human and livestock safety threats. In comparison to Oregon, California’s lack of a cougar management plan and ban on killing cougar has reduced incident and public safety issues and their management expense. California chose the word “incident” to describe an issue with cougar. Oregon chose the word “conflict.” Words matter, and being mindful of them could help create better public perspectives of cougar, and cougar management plans that benefit humans, the cougar, and our ecosystems.

California	Incident	Public Safety
2009-2013	739	20
Reference: https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Mammals/Mountain-Lion/Trends		
Oregon	Conflict	
2009-2013	2189	149
Reference: ODFW 2017 Cougar Management Plan, page 23. https://www.dfw.state.or.us/wildlife/cougar/docs/2017_Oregon_Cougar_Management_Plan.pdf		
ODFW statistician Dr. Richardson at a public meeting in Corvallis, Oregon, informed the audience that ODFW stats indicate kittens dispersing from their parent were not the conflict cougars. It was the orphaned kittens that were the conflict issues. Hunting, policy, and shoot-and-shovel create large populations of orphaned cougar kittens.		
Reference: https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Mammals/Mountain-Lion/Approved-Projects .		
Miller, A. 2019. The Valuations of Oregon's Cougar. Capstone, OSU Forestry Department Masters of Natural Resources.		

Recommended Path Forward

Oregonians do not deserve yet another cougar hunting bill void of the hallmarks of science, and inclusion of the public. We will never be able to stop a rare cougar attack, any more than we can stop auto accidents. Only through education, outreach, and a change in our perspectives will Oregonians find peace with their cougar.

Rather than another hunting bill that increases public and livestock safety concerns, I suggest that we use the survey company to understand Oregonian's willingness to co-exist with the cougar. Then we design tools for public participation and financial support of our cougar populations and the eco-services and eco-functions they sustain. One such tool is a cougar designed license plate program or other concepts such as License To Protect (below as a draft). Both – and many more - would provide a way for the public to earmark funds for cougar research, mitigation, and management. Both California and Washington have much to offer for improving Oregon's cougar management plan, and guiding Oregonians towards a resilient, and transformative future co-existing with the cougar.

DRAFT

SUMMARY

Requires Stateadsrre and Wildlife Commission to provide means for persons to make voluntary contributions to be used for programs that promote livestock safety and wildlife protection.

Establishes Oregonians for Wildlife and Livestock Safety Subaccount in Fish and Wildlife Account.

A BILL FOR AN ACT

Relating to the State Fish and Wildlife Commission; creating new provisions; and amending **ORS 496.303**.

Be It Enacted by the People of the State of Oregon:

SECTION 1. (1) The State Fish and Wildlife Commission shall provide a means for persons to make voluntary contributions to be used for outreach and educational programs that promote livestock safety and wildlife protection.

(2) The commission shall seek voluntary contributions in conjunction with the sale of licenses, tags and permits and by such other means as the commission considers appropriate. The commission shall establish a means by which persons who do not hunt wildlife but who desire to support the programs described in subsection (1) of this section may make voluntary contributions.

(3) If the commission implements an electronic licensing system, the commission shall include in that system a means for persons to make voluntary contributions to support the programs described in subsection (1) of this section.

SECTION 2. ORS 496.303 is amended to read:

496.303. (1) The Fish and Wildlife Account is established in the State

NOTE: Matter in boldfaced type in an amended section is new; matter [italic and bracketed] is existing law to be omitted. New sections are in boldfaced type.

Every Oregonian deserves to think like an ecologist and live like a citizen scientist. Those cougars belong to Oregonians, and if they are on Federal lands, they belong to the People. It is time to end Oregon's cougar hunting bills.

Kindest regards,

Allyson Jayne Miller,
Permaculture Farmer
Past elected Board member of Marion Soil and Water Conservation District
OSU Masters Grad Cert. Sustainable Natural Resources, and Masters of Natural Resources Grad Student
Director of Oregon Cougar Action Team

Reference:

Article #1 Washington State Cougar Management Plan

Article #2 Cougar response to a gradient of human development. 2017.

Maletzke, B., B. Kertson, M. Swanson, G. Koehler, R. Beausoleil, R. Wielgus, and H. Cooley. 2017. Ecosphere 8(7):e01828. 10.1002/ecs2.1828. School of the Environment, Washington State University, Pullman, Washington 99164 USA. Wildlife Science Group, School of Forest Resources, College of the Environment, University of Washington, Seattle, Washington 98195 USA. Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, 2218 Stephanie Brooke, Wenatchee, Washington 98801 USA. Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, 3515 State Highway 97A, Wenatchee, Washington 98801 USA.

Article #3 Demographic influences on cougar residential use and interactions with people in western Washington. 2013. Kertson, B.N.* Spencer, R.D., Grue, C.E. School of Forest Resources, College of the Environment, University of Washington, Seattle, WA 98195, USA (BNK) Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, 1775 12th Avenue NW, Suite 201, Issaquah, WA 98027, USA (RDS; deceased) United States Geological Survey, Washington Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit, School of Aquatic and Fisheries Sciences, University of Washington, Seattle, WA 98195, USA (CEG) Journal of Mammalogy, 94(2):269–281,

*** Correspondent:** brian.kertson@dfw.wa.gov