

ACTION ALERT

COMMENT DEADLINE: Oct. 6, 2015
HEARING: Oct. 9, 2015

Oregon Needs to Hear from You to Stop a Proposed Cougar Slaughter on 6,236 Square Miles of Pristine Habitat

Cougar management in Oregon is exclusively focused on killing more cougars, not on conservation or science. A case in point is Oregon's current proposal to establish target areas in pristine habitat where government agents can slaughter as many cougars as possible. Your help is urgently needed to stop them.

The reason for the proposed slaughter appears two-fold:

- to purge the habitat of predators in hopes that mule deer herds will rebound; and
- to remove competition for trophy hunters, who seem compelled to seek the cougar's natural prey to decorate their man cave walls.

There is no science to support the idea that killing predators will result in increased mule deer populations. In fact, research shows that weather, climate, and nutrition/forage conditions are the primary factors influencing deer populations, while predation plays a minor role. Mule deer in Oregon and elsewhere have been on the decline for decades. Deer and cougars have evolved in tandem for millennia. If cougars destroyed their prey source, neither would survive.

Summary of Cougar Proposal

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) has proposed establishing four cougar-killing target areas encompassing 6,236 square miles primarily in remote eastern Oregon. Within the target area boundaries federal USDA Wildlife Service agents and volunteer houndsmen (acting as agents of ODFW) will kill as many cougars as they can find, using packs of hounds and snares to capture the cats for easy killing. Because the hunters are government agents, they are not bound by Oregon law prohibiting the use of hounds by trophy hunters pursuing mountain lions.

Why They Must Be Stopped

Decades of field research from Washington State University consistently show that indiscriminate and heavy hunting of cougars results in more conflicts and predation, not less. The hunting creates social chaos among cougars, displacing and destroying their complex social system. The end result is an influx of juvenile males into the area, the very age class that is known to cause conflicts with people and result in higher predation levels.

Sample Talking Points

- I oppose the creation of cougar target areas.
- The Commission has a legal obligation to protect wildlife for all Oregonians.
- The target area actions do not benefit the majority of Oregonians and certainly are not in the best interest of cougars and those who value them.
- Science does not support the purging of cougars from an area as a means of growing more deer or reducing conflicts with livestock.
- The public opposes unethical hunting practices like using packs of dogs to tree cougars for easy targets. We voted twice to make this practice illegal.
- The public would not approve of eliminating natural predators from areas to benefit a handful of hunters who don't want competition, nor would they condone hounding.
- Don't scapegoat cougars as the reason for mule deer declines! This is simplistic and old school thinking.
- Mule deer have been in decline for decades in Oregon. Predation plays only a minor role in population fluctuations, the major influence on population is forage nutrition which depends on weather, climate, etc.
- Mule deer in Oregon are suffering from a highly contagious viral disease. This, plus the drought limiting nutrition, are the major probable factors in their recent decline.
- It is unethical and unthinkable to selectively "cleanse" wildlands of native species—especially for the benefit of minority special interest groups like hunters and ranchers.



America's mountain lions (aka cougars) are experiencing the same fate as Cecil, Zimbabwe's most famous and beloved lion, illegally killed in July 2015 by a Minnesota dentist on a trophy hunt. But what's happening here is even worse, in that the slaughter is legal and carried out by government agents on behalf of deer hunters. It is also merciless and scientifically unsound.

What You Can Do

Contact the ODFW Commission

Ask ODFW Commissioners to oppose the cougar target area proposal when they meet Oct. 9 to vote on Big Game Regulations proposals for 2016. Submit comments by Oct. 6 via phone (503) 947-6044, fax (503) 947-6042, or email to odfw.commission@state.or.us.

Testify at the Commission Meeting

Testify at the Oct. 9 Commission meeting. It starts at 8 a.m. at the Driftwood Shores Resort, Pacific Room, 2nd Fl, 88416 1st Ave, Florence, OR. Please keep comments to 5 minutes and bring several copies of your statement to give the administrator. Meeting details at www.dfw.state.or.us/agency/commission.

Contact the Governor

Let Oregon Governor Kate Brown know your feelings about the cougar target areas. Call (503) 378-4582 or comment online at www.oregon.gov/gov/Pages/share-your-opinion.aspx.



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