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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Cougar Fund would like to respond to two recent articles published by the *Baker City Herald* that we feel not only portray cougars in an unnecessarily negative light, but also amount to irresponsible journalism.

In the September 12 article “Cougar encounters on the rise, hunters say,” by Ed Merriman *The Herald* asserted that cougars were “losing their fear of humans” because a few hunters had reported seeing the animals while hunting. In fact, one of these hunters even suggested that the cougar might have been attracted to him because of the “elk calls and the elk scent he wears”. As we stated in an earlier press release sent to your paper, hunters must be mindful of the risks they face when outdoors. And frankly, if anyone would have the chance to encounter a cougar, it is likely to be a hunter. Ultimately suggesting that reported cougar sightings and close encounters by hunters—a group that is more prone to encounters with wildlife of every kind—indicate a loss of human fear by cougars is wildly inappropriate and amounts to a scare tactic by *The Herald*.

The September 19 article by Jayson Jacoby, “Residents spot cougars in city,” was also an alarmist piece of irresponsible journalism in which Mr. Jacoby neglected to use the opportunity to provide cougar safety information in his article. Information on what to do when encountering a cougar as well as common sense steps to avoid such situations is widely available on the Internet for dissemination. For example, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife readily provides such information on their website (http://www.dfw.state.or.us/swwd/mtn_lion.html).

To quote the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, "If you live in Oregon, odds are you live or play in mountain lion country. Like any large predator they can be dangerous, but they generally try to avoid humans. We can coexist with these magnificent animals. With a better understanding of mountain lions and their habitat, people can minimize potential problems." By choosing not to be part of the solution, *The Baker City Herald* has become one of the many outlets perpetuating the myth that cougars are merely dangerous predators who do not merit our understanding or tolerance.

Please see the attached safety tips as well as a copy of a press release pertaining to your September 12 article. The Cougar Fund is always available to answer question or comment on cougar issues. Thank you for your time and please do not hesitate to contact me in the future.

Sincerely,

Emorie Broemel
Communications Coordinator

Safety in Cougar Country

Preventative Actions

Be aware of your surroundings and recreate responsibly.
Consider hiking, biking and running with others.

Supervise children and do not leave them unattended, especially at dawn or dusk.

Keep all garbage, pet food or food scraps indoors to avoid attracting prey.

Keep pets and livestock in a secure area, especially at night.

Install outdoor lighting where you walk after dark or install motion activated lighting.

Seal off crawl spaces under deck areas to discourage cougars or other animals from bedding down under your home.

Do not feed wildlife. Predators follow Prey!

Minimize vegetation in your yard where a cougar could hide and avoid planting foliage that attracts prey.

Never approach a cougar!

Encountering a Cougar

Stay calm and back away slowly. Do not turn your back, run or bend over.

Avoid looking like prey. Try to make yourself appear as big as possible, make eye contact, open your jacket, and raise your arms.

Talk or sing to distinguish yourself as non-prey species.

If a lion is aggressive, throw rocks and sticks, yell as loud as you can. Always fight back and do not play dead.