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August 8, 2008

Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife  
600 Capitol Way N.  
Olympia, WA 98501

Dear Commissioners,

The Cougar Fund, a national nonprofit dedicated to the conservation of the cougar throughout its present and historic range, works on behalf of its members to ensure that cougar management, as well as management of their prey, are always held to the highest standards of peer-reviewed science. In addition to educating the public about the many issues that surround cougars, we look to balance human interests with healthy cougar populations. With these efforts in mind, The Cougar Fund would like to state that we oppose the extension of the 2004 pilot project that allows for the use of dogs to hunt cougars in five northeastern Washington counties.

If those in the state of Washington believe hound hunting is the most ethical and efficient way to hunt cougars, then public vote will reflect that. **However, to justify the way in which cougars are hunted by claiming it increases human safety is a blatant lie. To mislead the public in this way is highly irresponsible.**

**This project exploits the human safety issue to increase trophy-hunting opportunities. Peer-reviewed science published in the last few years has proven that the random hunting of cougars does not increase human safety.** Since 1890 only 22 people have died from cougar attacks, which is miniscule compared to the number of deaths incurred by bee stings and domestic dog attacks each year. Killing cougars in efforts to increase or maintain human safety is not productive, scientifically unjustified and regarded by other western states

as an unrealistic and archaic form of game management. Cougars are a self-regulating species, determined by food, habitat and social order. **The expansive killing of cougars not only increases the proportion of transient males in the population – an age and gender that has been shown to be disproportionately involved in depredation incidents – but may actually lead to increased litter sizes, since as population numbers decrease, reproductive rates are known to increase.**

Rather than the state reacting and spending valuable resources to kill “too many” or “problem” cougars, techniques such as appropriate land-use planning, improved animal husbandry and public education about living in cougar country will have a far greater effect in the long term.

We ask that the state find an alternative to this program and re-evaluate the cause for this argument. We would very much like to the state of WA create policy that reflects actual data and contemporary approaches to managing cougars such as those used in other western states.

The Cougar Fund is always available to answer questions or provide data.

Thank you.

Sincerely,



Sara L. Carlson  
Director of Programs & Operations

*preserve. protect. balance.*

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*The Cougar Fund is a 501 (c)(3) nonprofit educational organization. Tax identification no. 31-1796418*