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January 26, 2010

Senator Ken Schilz
P.O. Box 94604
State Capitol, Room 1202
Lincoln, NE 68509

Dear Senator Schilz,

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 comment on proposed HB747.

Rather than creating a bill that would formalize what is essentially already allowed under state policy, we strongly urge the state to give farmers and ranchers the information and tools to protect their livestock. We fail to find scientific evidence that supports Nebraska's need to pass a bill to allow killing mountain lions, bobcats, and other "predatory" animals.

Rather than the State spending valuable resources on a reactionary policy, we highly recommend that the state:

- **Increase public awareness and education about living in cougar country.**
- **Encourage appropriate land-use planning.**
- **Promote improved animal husbandry techniques.**
- **Hold farmers and ranchers accountable for ignoring ways to reduce or prevent predation.**

These measures will have a far greater effect protecting people, livestock and cougar populations in the long term. In a state with no viable cougar populations, it is presumptuous to define cougars as "predators" and basically relegate them to the status of vermin. As cougars continue to be seen in Nebraska, we hope that the state will use modern and progressive management techniques rather than a philosophy of eliminating wildlife that is considered less "profitable" than others.

The Cougar Fund would also like to reiterate that killing mountain lions to increase or maintain human and livestock safety is neither productive, nor scientifically proven and regarded by many 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.**

Thank you for considering these comments and the Cougar Fund is always available to answer questions or provide data.

Sincerely,



Sara L. Carlson
Director of Programs

Literature Cited

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