

Board of Directors

Marc Bekoff, Ph.D.
H Webb Blessley
Howard W. Buffett
Patricio Robles Gil
Dr. Jane Goodall, Ph.D., DBE
Rick Hopkins, Ph.D.
Cara Blessley Lowe
Thomas D. Mangelsen
Corinne R. Rutledge
John. E Swallow



September 10, 2008

Representative Peter Buckley
900 Court St., NE H-376
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Representative Buckley,

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 goals in mind, The Cougar Fund would like to commend your efforts to suspend Oregon's current cougar management plan and practices in light of recent scientific findings in order to reach a new, and better standard for cougar management.

The following points reflect our position:

- Cougars are a self-regulating species and the killing of cougars in efforts to increase or maintain livestock and human safety has not been scientifically justified.
- The extreme measure of the unlimited and loosely monitored killing of cougars is not the best means to accomplishing the goal of decreasing depredation incidents.
- The expansive killing of cougars not only increases the proportion of transient juvenile 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.
- The Cougar Fund feels that South Dakota is ignoring the latest peer-reviewed science in this proposal.
- A 2008 Washington study by Robinson et al on the implications of sink populations in cougar management that found carnivore management plans that do not take into account specific responses to harvest, may be ineffective for local population control. They state

“cougar removal in small game management areas will increase immigration and recruitment of younger animals from adjacent areas, resulting in little or no reduction in cougar densities and shift population structure toward younger animals.”

- We suggest alternative management techniques such as appropriate land-use planning, improved animal husbandry and public education about living in cougar country that will have a far greater effect in the long term.
- Additionally lawmakers should provide tax incentives to pay for fences and frightening devices, such as motion detectors and sirens. Laws should also punish irresponsible landowners who attract cougar problems through actions such as leaving an animal carcass in a pasture.

We feel that, at times, hunting quotas are over exploited in the name of human safety. 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.

Rather than the state reacting by spending valuable resources to kill “too many” or “problem” cougars, proactive 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 than those reactive ones currently in use.

We ask that the state find an alternative to and reevaluate their current management policies. We would very much like to the state of Oregon create policy that reflects actual data and contemporary approaches to managing cougars such as those used in other western states. It is because human safety is a chief concern of the Cougar Fund that we ask the Oregon legislature to take our above position into account when working with game managers to set new guidelines.

The Cougar Fund is always available to answer questions or provide data. Again, we thank you for your efforts on behalf of *America’s Greatest Cat*.

Sincerely,



Sara L. Carlson
Director of Programs & Operations