

6/15/23

To: Oregon State Board of Agriculture
635 Capital St, NE
Salem, OR 97301-2532

From: Dennis P. Sheehy
Wildlife Committee Chair, Oregon Cattlemen's Association
Wallowa County Rancher

RE: Resolution Number: 275/Resolution Title: Cougar Management Plan

The Oregon Cattlemen's Association is the primary representative for livestock producers in Oregon, with members in most of Oregon's Counties.

The Oregon Cattlemen's Association and its' members recognize the need for wildlife management as they are often directly affected by wildlife depredation.

The Oregon Cattlemen's Association fully supports the Oregon State Board of Agriculture's resolution to support Oregon's 2017 Cougar Management Plan. However, the Oregon Cattlemen's Association does have a concern relative to the 2017 Cougar Management Plan. In Chapter III of the Cougar Plan, four management objectives define proactive management actions to be taken by ODFW. The actions that will be taken are based on maintaining a state-wide cougar population of 3000 cougars (currently the cougar population is estimated to comprise approximately 6,600 individuals.

Management Objective 3 relates to proactive management action if cougar-livestock conflict occurs: "So long as objective 1 is met (i.e., statewide cougar population **above** 3,000 animals), ODFW will proactively manage cougar-livestock conflicts as measured by non-hunting mortalities of cougars taken as a result of livestock damage complaints, ODFW **may** take management actions to reduce cougar populations."

The Oregon Cattlemen's Association is concerned that if the cougar population falls below 3000 individuals ODFW will not take proactive management to reduce the cougar-livestock conflict, even if incidences of conflict are trending upward. The OCA believes that several on-going factors may cause a decline in the cougar population. These include: i) cougar mortalities caused by an expanding population of wolves in the state (i.e., wolves are dominant relative to cougars, and are known to kill cougars), ii) loss of habitat from natural causes such as wildfire and/or human development activities, and iii) loss of food sources due to competition with bears and wolves, especially for juvenile ungulates such as deer and elk.

The Oregon Cattlemen's Association suggests that this issue be addressed by the Oregon State Board of Agriculture during the Board meeting prior to submitting the resolution supporting the 2017 ODFW Cougar Management Plan.

Thank You