

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON WATER AND ENVIRONMENT

February 26, 2001
8:30 am

Hearing Room E
Tapes 30-31

MEMBERS PRESENT: **Rep. Betsy Close, Chair**
 Rep. Laurie Monnes Anderson, Vice-Chair
 Rep. Susan Morgan, Vice-Chair
 Rep. Mark Hass
 Rep. Bob Jenson
 Rep. Deborah Kafoury
 Rep. Al King
 Rep. Jeff Kruse
 Rep. Jan Lee

STAFF PRESENT: **Megan Palau, Administrator**
 Shannon Relaford, Committee Assistant

MEASURE/ISSUES HEARD:
 HB 2967 Public Hearing

These minutes are in compliance with Senate and House Rules. Only text enclosed in quotation marks reports a speaker's exact words. For complete contents, please refer to the tapes.

TAPE/#	Speaker	Comments
TAPE 30, A		
004	Chair Close	Convenes meeting at 8:39 a.m.
007	Megan Palau	Presents explanation of bill.
014	Rod Harder	Executive Director of Oregon Sportsman Defense Fund gives background on bill and expresses support of the bill. Reports on the work group for the bill.
048	Chair Close	Opens public hearing on HB 2967.
<u>HB 2967 PUBLIC HEARING</u>		
050	Rep. Mark Simmons	Speaker of the House, District 58, expresses his support of the bill, stresses the importance of the issue.
080	Rep. Kruse	Recalls the last session and concerns about the problem and thanks the speaker.
092	Chair Close	Commends the Speaker on behalf of the committee.
095	Rep. Kreiger	District 48, presents history of cougar issue and testimony in support of the bill.
148	Rep. Monnes Anderson	Questions the population increase of people in Curry County.
152	Rep. Kreiger	Responds not a huge growth.
155	Rep. Monnes Anderson	Continues by questioning if the cougar population has mushroomed.
156	Rep. Kreiger	Replies it has.

157	Rep. Monnes Anderson	Asks what animals are the natural predators of cougars.
159	Rep. Kreiger	Replies he doesn't know of any other than people.
163	Chair Close	Asks for clarification of timber practices affects on elk.
167	Rep. Kreiger	Responds elk and deer have moved west down to the coast and cougar have expanded their territory to follow.
175	Rep. Morgan	Addresses studies on cougar population and safety in rural residential areas.
200	Rep. Kreiger	Concurs.
201	Dick Shafer Gloria Shafer Rachel Shafer	Residents of Elgin, Oregon state their fears of the cougar and support of the bill.
240	Rachel Shafer	States she had about twenty cats and now she has five and she is afraid to take her little brother outside and play.
250	Rep. Morgan	Questions how long they've lived in Elgin.
257	Gloria Shafer	Responds all her life.
265	Rep. Morgan	Asks if they've noticed an increase in the siting of cougar.
270	Shafer	Responds she had never seen a cougar until she saw one in downtown Elgin.
280	Rep. Morgan	Continues by asking if this is a problem that is increasing.
284	Shafer	Replies definitely, there are cats all around.
289	Rep. Morgan	Asks if they are the teenage male cougar looking for a territory.
292	Shafer	Replies there is a mother with kittens and a 250-pound cat.
295	Chair Close	Asks what the process is when the sitings occur.
297	Shafer	Replies they call the Department of Fish and Game in LaGrande, they've called Portland Fish and Wildlife and called Rep. Simmons office.
309	Chair Close	Asks if within the city limits you can shoot a cougar.
312	Shafer	Replies no, Fish and Wildlife says they cannot deal with cougar, because they cannot legally shoot them.
325	Dick Shafer	Presents testimony and incidences of cats in support of the bill.
417	Jim Soares	Resident of Wallowa, tells of experience with a cougar that posed a threat and presents testimony in support of the bill (EXHIBIT A.)
Tape 31, A		
082	Chair Close	Asks if when he shot the cougar was he threatened with prosecution.
085	Soares	Replies no, explains he works closely with ODFW.
094	Chair Close	Follows by asking if they were comfortable with him shooting the cougar.
095	Soares	Responds yes.
096	Rep. Morgan	Requests description of neighborhood as to size and size of parcels.
100	Soares	Describes property, average lot size is an acre.
111	Rep. Morgan	Asks how long has Soares lived in the area.
112	Soares	Replies 24 years.
115	Rep. Morgan	Asks if he's noticed an increase in cougar sitings.
118	Soares	Responds yes the increase has been incredible continues by describing cougar behavior.
137	Chair Close	Questions if cougars track hunters.
145	Soares	Responds they do stalk hunters.
150	Gary Holland	Owner of property in Wheeler County and Clackamas County

		has had issues with cougar in both places. Expresses support for the bill (EXHIBIT B .)
256	Rep. Morgan	Asks for description of neighborhood, size of parcels and closeness to each other.
260	Holland	Replies they are on 5-acre lots, all timber.
262	Rep. Morgan	Asks if it is all developed and for how long
263	Holland	Replies the majority is developed. Continues with description.
270	Rep. Morgan	Inquires how long has he lived there.
275	Holland	Replies 25 years.
276	Rep. Morgan	Explains she wants to get a feel for how the area has been developed.
279	Holland	States most of the homes have been there for years.
282	Rep. Morgan	Asks if cougars were common when they first moved into the area.
284	Holland	Replies he did not see a cougar for 24 years describes the bear issue and attempts to trap the cougar.
323	Rep. Morgan	Asks if the trapping was successful.
325	Holland	Replies no. Submits written testimony from David and Marcia Hazelwood (EXHIBIT C) and continues with testimony.
TAPE 30, B		
025	Rep. Morgan	Asks if there have been kills taking place in the day.
026	Holland	Replies yes.
30	Rep. Monnes Anderson	Comments on Gresham sitings and asks for comments about bear population.
043	Holland	Speaks of bear being much more prevalent than in the past, remarks on extent of damage caused by bears but bear usually will run from humans.
090	Rep. Lee	Questions where he lives.
095	Holland	Responds with a description of where he lives.
100	Rep. Lee	Comments on having cougar in the area where she lived 40 years ago.
104	Holland	Continues with description of living near the protected area.
118	Charlie Stone	Presents testimony in support of the bill and recalls situation with two cougars in which he was forced to kill them both. States his experience with bear.
181	Chair Close	Asks if one of the bears had come into the tent would he have wanted to be able to shoot it.
185	Stone	Replies there were no tents and no guns, but yes he would have liked the opportunity.
190	Rep. Morgan	Questions if it is odd for cougars to be hunting during the day.
194	Stone	Responds it is unusual to have two together it may be due to increased population
200	Jerod Broadfoot	Assistant to Director of Oregon Sportsmans Fund presents written testimony in support of the bill. (EXHIBIT D)
226	Rep. Kreiger	Addresses bear damage to trees and the rate of increase in the population in Curry County.
278	Rep. Morgan	Asks if bear have historically been the problem they are now.
283	Rep. Kreiger	Responds no.
293	Rep. Morgan	Questions under the current wildlife regulations what are the options to manage bear.
295	Rep. Kreiger	Replies you can get a permit to take bear on your own property but you can not spend all day everyday hunting bear.
300	Roy Elicker	Legislative Coordinator for Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) presents testimony in support of the bill

(EXHIBIT E.)

338 Chair Close Commends ODFW for working with people that have had encounters with cougars and bears.

340 Elicker Replies with the quantity of complaints it is understandable that staff would have their hands full.

350 Rep. Kafoury Questions if the complaints received in 1999 were an increase from previous years.

354 Elicker Replies yes.

362 Rep. Lee Asks about how many bear complaints.

365 Elicker Replies 904 black bears, 421 involved personal safety or pet safety. Mentions bear saturation in the state.

370 Rep. Kafoury Asks if after lowering the tags for cougar there has been an increase in number of tags.

380 Elicker Responds yes.

385 Rep. Kafoury Follows by asking if there has been an increase in the number of cougars taken.

389 Elicker Replies yes there has been an increase and offers to supply the numbers.

390 Rep. Kruse Comments that the price of tags decreased but the actual revenue to the department increased.

395 Jim Welsh Oregon Family Farm Association, reports of sitings and gives support for bill. Expresses concern for livestock and making a living but more concern for children.

TAPE 30, B

060 Chair Close Closes public hearing on HB 2967 at 10:05 a.m. and opens work session on HB 2976.

HB 2967 Work Session

062 Rep. Jenson MOTION: Moves HB 2967 to the floor with a DO PASS recommendation.

066 Rep. Monnes Anderson Comments on the need to have a balance between environment and safety and expresses support for the bill.

076 Rep. Jenson Recalls the formation of an incidence response team to respond to a human fatality in a cougar event and questions if it was formed and where it is.

086 Elicker Replies he is not sure where it is in the planning efforts but will find out.

090 Rep. Jenson Follows with comments that the department has recognized it as being a major public relations and human problem. Stresses that the committee has an obligation to try to prevent those things from taking place.

109 Rep. King Comments on the broad support for the measure. Stresses protection but also understanding people are moving into cougar habitat.

138 Rep. Monnes Anderson Mentions the weather factor and that cougars have not had to attack humans because there is enough food around. States her support for the bill.

145 Rep. Kruse Mentions the e-mails he has received have been mostly from Portland in opposition to the bill. Expresses his hope that those opposed would really understand the issue.

160 VOTE: 9-0
AYE: 9 - Hass, Jenson, Kafoury, King, Kruse, Lee, Monnes Anderson, Morgan, Close

179 **Chair Close** **The motion CARRIES.**
 Chair Close **KING will lead discussion on the floor.**
 Closes work session on HB 2769 and adjourns meeting at 10:25
 a.m.

Submitted By,

Reviewed By,

Shannon Relaford,
Committee Assistant

Megan Palau,
Administrator

EXHIBIT SUMMARY

- A – HB 2769, written testimony, Jim Soares, 2 pp.**
- B – HB 2769, written testimony, Gary Holland, 3 pp.**
- C – HB 2769, written testimony, David & Marcia Hazlewood, 2 pp.**
- D – HB 2769, written testimony, Jerod Broadfoot, 12 pp.**
- E – HB 2769, written testimony, Roy Elicker, 1 p.**
- F – HB 2769, written testimony, Sealund, 4 pp.**
- G – HB 2769, written testimony, Wese, 1 p.**