

# Local & State

## First fatal cougar attack prompts questions about managing the cats

By Zach Umess  
Salem Statesman Journal

SALEM — What happens now?

In the wake of Oregon's first fatal attack by a cougar — and the second deadly attack in the Northwest this year — the question of how best to manage the state's big cat population has reached the forefront.

Even before a cougar attacked and killed 55-year-old hiker Diana Bober in Mount Hood National Forest last week, mountain lions were already in the public eye.

Their increasing numbers — an estimated 6,600 statewide — have pushed the predators closer to Oregon's population centers, officials said. That's led to a series of high-profile incidents in The Dalles, Ashland, Silverton and Dallas.

Complaints about cougars have tripled in the Willamette Valley since 2011. And the number of cougars killed due to human or livestock conflicts reached 169 animals in 2016, according to state records.

Hunters say they've seen the problem coming for years, ever since a ballot initiative in 1994 outlawed the use of hounds to hunt cougars.

They say it eliminated the most effective tool for managing cougar numbers and allowed the population to skyrocket.

"This is a statistical problem now," said Jim Akenson, a longtime cougar biologist now working for the Oregon Hunters Association. "The more cougars you have on the landscape, the greater the chance of a negative encounter. If their numbers continue to grow, you do worry about this happening again."

Akenson said reinstating hound hunting would not only bring cougar numbers down to healthier levels — around 3,500 animals statewide, he said — it would also reestablish a greater fear of humans in animals increasingly brazen about showing up in populated areas, he said.

Akenson said he'd take a county-by-county approach, looking to cap cougar num-

### Cougar killed near site of attack is being examined

ZIGZAG, Oregon (AP) — Authorities say they are investigating whether an adult female cougar they killed at the site of a fatal attack on a human is the same animal that killed the 55-year-old hiker.

U.S. Department of Agriculture officers killed a cougar Friday that appeared at the site of the deadly attack near Mt. Hood, the state's highest peak, by a cougar on Diana Bober, an avid and experienced hiker.

Bober's body was found Sept. 10, almost two weeks after she was last heard from. She was the first person known to have been killed by a cougar in the wild in Oregon and the second in the Pacific Northwest this year.

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife says in a news release that the cougar's body will be taken to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Forensics Laboratory in Ashland. The laboratory will analyze the evidence to determine if the cougar is the same one that killed Bober.

bers based on local conditions.

Environmental groups strongly disagree. They point out how rare fatal attacks by cougars are and say hunting causes more problems than it fixes.

"This is an absolute tragedy — a person has died — but we have to remember that this is very, very rare," said Dr. John W. Laundré, a professor at Western Oregon University and a board member of the environmental group Predator Defense.

This is Oregon's first confirmed fatal attack over a long history, he noted.

Three people have been killed in California and Colorado in cougar attacks, while two have died in Washington, including earlier this year, when a cougar attacked two mountain bikers near North Bend, killing one of them.

"If you look at it objectively, how few incidents occur really speaks to how well cougars live with us," Laundré said. "Deer kill far more people than cougars by being on the highway and getting hit by a car. Should we wipe out every deer seen near a road?"

In terms of management, hunting is actually among the worst ways to control a population, Laundré said.

Oregon sport hunters killed an average of 261 cougars each year during the past decade, accord-

ing to state numbers, even as cougar numbers kept increasing.

"There's no evidence that hunting reduces cougar numbers," Laundré said.

Even worse, he said, "using sport hunting as a way of controlling them kills animals that aren't causing any problems, it disrupts the social order, so you have these young male cats that don't get the training they need."

Laundré suggested California's model, which removes mountain lions that cause problems but hasn't allowed sport hunting since 1990. California's population is estimated at between 4,000 and 6,000 animals.

Hunters say they could control the population, but need hounds to achieve that goal.

"The harvest of (cougars) would be doubled if hounds were allowed," Akenson said. "Plus, they impart a man-fear response from cougars that tends to keep cats more wary."

Cougars were once abundant in Oregon, but similar to other predators, such as wolves, that started to change with the arrival of settlers in the 1800s.

Before Oregon was even an official state, bounties were placed on cougars. The bounty was \$10 per animal in 1911 and \$25 by 1925.

"The most effective and devastating method was

poison," Derek Broman, carnivore coordinator for the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, told the Statesman Journal earlier this year.

The number of animals dropped sharply to an estimated 200 by the 1960s.

But, unlike wolves, cougars never went extinct in Oregon. A few pockets remained, mostly in the southwest and northeast.

"My belief is that unlike wolves, which are pack animals and easier to find, cougars are solitary and prefer really difficult terrain for humans," Broman said. "They likely persisted because there were pockets of them where humans just couldn't reach."

In 1967, cougars were declared a "game animal" and subject to regulation by state officials. Bag limits were established for hunting cougars, which allowed their numbers to rebound to around 2,000 animals by 1987, according to ODFW.

### Should there be a statewide cap on cougars?

Once the number of cougars rebounded, their numbers continued to grow and expand into just about any place with a food source — mainly, deer and elk.

The number of cougars increased at a consistent clip, growing steadily to today's estimated total of 6,600.

A big question has been whether the state should establish a hard cap on cougar numbers.

Broman told the Statesman Journal earlier this year that they project Oregon being able to support around 7,600 cougars statewide, although that wasn't a number they necessarily believe they'll reach.

"The arrival of wolves has brought a lot of uncertainty, so trying to pick a hard number right now would be tricky and might end up being inaccurate in the future," Broman said.

For the moment, state officials haven't commented on whether the current situation will mean any change in cougar management policy going forward.

## LOCAL BRIEFING

### Fire burns home south of Baker City

American Red Cross disaster responders were called to help one adult displaced by a Sunday morning fire on Highway 30.

The fire, which was reported at 12:32 a.m. at 34622 Old Highway 30 south of Baker City, was in an area that is not served by a fire protection district, Sheriff Travis Ash said today.

Two deputies were dispatched and a Baker City ambulance also responded to the scene, Ash said today.

The Red Cross provided resources to help the individual, whose name was not available in time for this report, with immediate basic needs such as housing, food, clothing and other items.

### Baker County Democrats meet Thursday

Baker County Democrats will have their monthly meeting on Thursday, Sept. 20 at Roger's Fellowship Hall at the corner of Fourth and Washington behind the County Courthouse. There will be a meet-and-great with Solea Kabakov, a candidate for Senate District 30 from 5 p.m. to 6 p.m., with refreshments available.

The meeting will start at 6 p.m. and the topic is canvassing efforts for the Nov. 6 election. Volunteers are needed and all are welcome to attend.

### Family Event at Powder River Correctional

The sixth-annual Family Event took place Aug. 25 at the Powder River Correctional Facility in Baker City. Almost 200 people, including relatives and friends of inmates in the minimum-security prison, attended the event.

The event, which included a bounce house, face-painting, free snow cones and a variety of lawn games, was created to bring families together.

"Given PRCF's rural location and seasonal road conditions, bringing families and friends together can sometimes be a challenge, so we try to make this really special for the Adults in Custody and their families," Debi Geddes, the prison's public information officer, said in a press release.

### Walden to attend meeting in Baker City

Rep. Greg Walden will be in Baker City on Wednesday, Sept. 19 to meet with the Eastern Oregon Counties Association.

The meeting will start at 8 a.m. at the Baker County Courthouse, 1995 Third St.

Walden will be in attendance to discuss the Association's objections to the Blue Mountain Forest Plan Revision.

### Nonprofit leadership seminar Sept. 25

A seminar on nonprofit leadership is set for Sept. 25 at Crossroads Carnegie Art Center, 2020 Auburn Ave.

The seminar, which costs \$35 per person, will run from 10 a.m. to noon.

The workshop, "Board Recruitment and Engagement: Tips and Tactics for Building the Board of Your Dreams," is open to all residents involved in nonprofit work, but is specifically directed at board of directors.

Cause Oregon, a consulting firm led by Kim Ryals, will put on the seminar.

Seating is limited and can be reserved by visiting [www.causeoregon.com](http://www.causeoregon.com).

### Dog Jog scheduled for Oct. 6

The second-annual Dog Jog is set for Saturday, Oct. 6, at Central Park in downtown Baker City. Registration is available at Baker City Hall or online at <http://bakercity.com/2283/Dog-Park>. A link is also available on Facebook — search for Baker City Partners for Paws.

Entry is \$20 and includes a T-shirt if registered by Sept. 21. Entry the day of the event is \$10 without a shirt. Same-day registration starts at 8:30 a.m., and the event starts at 9 a.m.

## AUCTION

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This year's contest brought in more than 40 salt blocks, plus poems without blocks — one of which was sold at the auction.

"Somebody wanted to buy a poem only — that was kind of neat," Deschner said.

The mechanical salt licker cow built and donated by Buck Pilkenton sold for \$5,000 to become a piece of public art in Bourne.

"Because Bourne doesn't have any public art," Deschner said.

This year's proceeds bring the 12-year total close to \$130,000 raised for the Parkinson's Center at Oregon Health & Science University in Portland.

## WATER

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Though water use during September has been a bit higher than usual, the trend is a positive one, said Michelle Owen, the city's public works director.

She expects demand for water will continue to decrease during the second half of September, with temperatures dipping into the 30s on several mornings and afternoon highs staying below 80.

"The snow was a welcome site at Goodrich Lake this morning," Owen said on Thursday morning, when a dusting of snow whitened the higher elevations of the Elkhorn Mountains. "That tells me summer is winding down and fall is just days away."

Goodrich Lake, a natural lake high in the Elkhorns that the city dammed many decades ago to increase its holding capacity, is one of the city's two sources to supplement the springs and streams in the 10,000-acre watershed on the east slopes of the Elkhorns about 10 miles west of town.

The other source is a well. The city has a state permit

allowing it to divert as much as 200 million gallons of water from the watershed each year into the well to top off the aquifer.

Goodrich, which has a capacity of about 210 million gallons, was holding about 85

million gallons as of Sept. 7.

Although the two hottest days on record at the airport happened during August — 108 degrees on Aug. 9, followed by 109 on Aug. 10 — the city actually used less water during the month than

during July — 140 million gallons, about 30 million less than in July.

The highest one-day water usage this summer was on July 18, when the city used 5.8 million gallons.

## MARK YOUR CALENDAR & SCHEDULE YOUR APPOINTMENT

### SEPTEMBER

2018

## SPECIALTY CLINIC SCHEDULE

Baker Clinic  
3175 Pochahontas Road  
Baker City, OR



[WWW.SAINTALPHONSUS.ORG](http://WWW.SAINTALPHONSUS.ORG)

September 12th,  
19th & 26th  
Dr. Hampton—  
Podiatry  
541-963-0265

September 14th  
Mt. Pine  
Dermatology  
208-898-7467

September 19th & 20th  
Sawtooth Orthotics  
& Prosthetics  
208-344-9981

September 19th  
Dr. Dytiapco, MD  
Idaho Nephrology  
208-501-8955

September 21st  
Dr. Connor—  
GYN/ONC  
208-302-2200

September 27th  
Dr. Petrussek—  
ENT  
541-963-8643

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*Where It's All About You!*