



Washington State House of Representatives  
Representative Joel Kretz  
House Deputy Republican Leader  
7<sup>th</sup> Legislative District

March 10<sup>th</sup>, 2020

Dear commissioners,

During your upcoming meeting to discuss cougar hunting rule changes, I urge you to consider every available tool at your disposal to bring about some measure of relief for northeast Washington residents who are seeing a continual increase in cougar/human interactions.

As you know, the number of cougars in conflict has skyrocketed. In addition, the number of cougars killed by Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) officers in 2019 was four times greater than 2015.

These statewide numbers were given to me by Nelson Falkenburg, WDFW Legislative Coordinator, Budget and Government Affairs, Director's Office:

Cougars removed by WDFW officers in 2015: 26  
Cougars removed by WDFW officers in 2016: 27  
Cougars removed by WDFW officers in 2017: 32  
Cougars removed by WDFW officers in 2018: 80  
Cougars removed by WDFW officers in 2019: 105

I am grateful that WDFW officers have responded to the significant uptick in cougar threats to the general public. However, I am concerned that we seem to be paying our game wardens to do something that hunters used to do, while paying the state fees and licenses to do so.

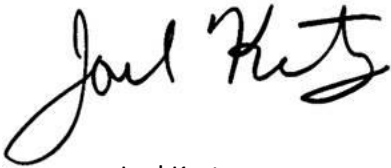
I have sponsored several bills over the years to try and address this issue. While Olympia continues to turn a deaf ear to the plight of rural Washingtonians, I'm hoping the commission may be more receptive. It is time to increase bag limits, institute more liberal hunting seasons, and target specific GMUs with limited public safety cougar removal with hounds. I'm under no delusion that this will immediately solve the problem, but it is a step in the right direction.

The cougar issue is real for many communities across the state, but especially so for the constituents in my northeast Washington district. Pets and livestock have been killed and many communities are on edge, wondering if a child will be next. The memories of the three children attacked over a decade ago in my district when the cougar problem was this dire are still fresh in many minds.

Again, I urge you to do everything in your power to help protect my constituents from the increasing threat of cougar/human conflict.

Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns. And thank you for your consideration,

Cordially,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joel Kretz". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Joel Kretz  
State Representative  
7<sup>th</sup> Legislative District