



A banner on OHA's new website encourages members to participate in local chapter projects. See the new site at www.oregonhunters.org

Cougar Plan adopted; Wolf Plan up next



By Jim Akenson, OHA Conservation Director

The revised 2017 Cougar Plan was officially adopted at the Oct. 13 Oregon Fish and Commission meeting in Prineville, by a 4-1 vote. It seems like a no-brainer to maintain current management options within our state for cougars, but it hasn't been that simple. OHA has lobbied tirelessly to maintain the current hunting season structure and retain and expand the application of cougar target areas where big game populations and social considerations warrant additional actions.

The last Cougar Plan revision was in 2006. This current revision is backed with a lot of scientific findings, and much of this includes cougar research from Oregon conducted over the past 30 years. The plan specifies that ODFW district biologists will play key roles in initiating target areas, which will depend on factors such as plummeting management objective numbers for deer and elk, increased livestock damage reports, and threats to human and pet safety within respective districts.

For general cougar hunting, the season will remain year-round or until zone mortality quotas have been met per each of the six zones. As of 2017, the estimated statewide cougar population is over 6,000, which is doubled from the 1994 estimate of 3,000 cats.

The next management challenge will be getting the Wolf Plan approved. This will be addressed at the next two Commission meetings in Salem, with a Dec. 8 meeting for informational testimony, followed by a Jan. 19 vote for plan adoption. The current draft plan identifies future controlled hunting as a management tool for wolves. We need to maintain this option as populations expand. A strong showing by OHA members is needed for these upcoming meetings to support plan approval by the Fish and Wildlife Commission.

Attention OHA members! Your help is needed!

We need you to support the NEW Oregon Wolf Plan language, in particular as it respects wolf recovery, but also supports management through controlled take (limited hunting) in Phase III, which the Eastern Oregon Zone is currently in.

Send emails before Nov. 27 and/or attend and/or testify at the upcoming Commission meeting on Dec. 8, 8 a.m. at ODFW Headquarters, 4034 Fairview Industrial Dr. SE in Salem.

OHA needs a respectful show of support for the new Wolf Conservation and Management Plan. Allowing hunting as a tool for controlled take, once populations warrant, is a critical option to have in this plan. The meeting will include opportunity for public comment.

To send written comments:

- email: odfw.commission@state.or.us
- In the subject line of the email use the words: Please Support the Draft Wolf Plan (2017/18)
- State that you are a member of OHA.
- Make your email original and stress just 2 or 3 points. (Use Examples listed below, or similar).
- Do not use a form email. Please make it your own.



To attend and/or testify:

- To testify, you must register at the meeting.
- Please be concise and specific. Time is limited to 2 to 3 minutes.
- Be respectful of others; please represent us well.
- State that you're an OHA member and wear OHA clothing if possible.
- Testimony must be factual and lean toward the professional and scientific need to properly manage the wolf population. We must protect other wildlife and livestock.

Points to consider:

- 🐾 Wolves have successfully re-established in Oregon and ODFW has been proactive in planning for them through an effective management plan process – supported by OHA.
- 🐾 OHA is not proposing hunting at this time, but to have this tool available once population numbers warrant numbers reduction.
- 🐾 When and where needed, hunters can aid ODFW in controlled take, lowering financial impact on ODFW's strained budget, most of which now comes from hunters and anglers. Any controlled take would be done with close concern for the species abundance and effect on other economic interests, such as livestock raising and big game hunting.
- 🐾 ODFW's proposed plan allows for continued growth and health of the wolf population, yet considers other very important concerns for Oregonians, such as hunting for deer, elk, and other big game, and the agricultural activities of Oregon.

ODFW opens discussion on anti-poaching campaign

By Al Elkins, OHA Lobbyist

Staff from ODFW recently reported that they are discussing with Oregon State Police a possible plan for addressing the budget note requiring ODFW to embark on an anti-poaching campaign, and added that the agency will soon reach out to OHA and other stakeholders.

OHA succeeded in attaching a budget note to the ODFW budget during the legislative session. The budget note for a public anti-poaching campaign reads:

“ODFW is instructed to develop a proposal for a broad anti-poaching public awareness campaign, including a budget, that will include, but not be limited to: An anti-poaching public awareness campaign strategy, identification of tools needed to combat poaching, and any statute changes needed to address poaching. The Department is to report to the appropriate Ways and Means Subcommittee during the February 2018 session on the details and budget for this work.”



OHA to review proposal on waterways

OHA has been asked to review a legislative concept that would require a statewide review when local decisions have the potential to substantively reduce public access for public access on Oregon’s navigable waterways (certain rivers, lakes, bays, etc.).

The OHA Legislative Committee is reviewing the proposal and will monitor its progress throughout the interim and the upcoming legislative sessions.

PERS funding could affect hunters

A task force appointed by Governor Kate Brown and charged with finding \$5 billion to reduce the \$25 billion unfunded liability in Oregon’s public pension fund will deliver a report to the governor Nov. 1 that includes the creation of a 5-percent surcharge on all licenses, permits and other fees. According to their preliminary findings, a 5-percent surcharge on ODFW would generate \$47.5 million a year, or \$475 million over 10 years.

In the past when a surcharge of any kind has been proposed to license fees issued by ODFW, there has been the question of whether or not it represents a diversion of fees, which is prevented by federal law. OHA will watch this issue closely.

Legislative Session planning ahead

ODFW is holding a meeting of the Conservation Leaders Group in December, and the focus of the meeting will be conservation coordination for the 2018 Legislative Session. OHA representatives will be in attendance.

Hancock offers coast access in exchange for A&H funding

By Ken McCall, OHA Resource Director

Hancock Forest Management is seeking \$950,000 of state Access & Habitat funding in exchange for providing public hunt access to 210,000 acres in the western Oregon Coast range over the next five years. The subject timber lands are managed but not owned by Hancock, and are entirely within the Oregon Coast Range. They span north to south from Tillamook to Yachats and east to west from the western Willamette Valley fringe to the coast.

This project is similar to the 2016 Hancock access project in northeast Oregon, with a key difference. Hancock’s request in this proposal includes walk-in hunting during fire seasons subject to fire closures in line with industrial fire precaution levels.

The project now moves from the A&H Board to the ODFW Commission with a recommendation for approval. A&H project funding, if approved, would be supplemented by existing funds from the federal 2014 Farm Bill.

OHA is discussing wildlife habitat projects in western Oregon with Hancock employees.



Looking forward in the Owyhee Basin

A group of Owyhee Basin Stewardship Coalition members have asked OHA for our thoughts on moving forward with participation in land management issues in the southeast corner of Oregon. The landscape is largely managed by the BLM, Oregon Division of State Lands and private ranchers. Many big game and upland bird species inhabit the vast desert region. For more on Oregon’s 600,000 acres of state-controlled rangelands, visit <http://www.oregon.gov/dsl/Land/Pages/Rangeland.aspx>

The Owyhee Basin Stewardship Coalition was formed in 2016 largely in opposition to the Owyhee Canyonlands National Monument proposal. That national monument proposal was not signed by the last president and has been mostly quiet in national monument news since. Quiet does not mean gone in the case of most large-scale land management designation proposals. These proposals commonly resurface as politics and public interests change over time.

Moving ahead on Elliott management

Elliott Forest management issues continue to be an active public discussion. During the Oct. 17 State Land Board meeting, key parts of future plans discussed included developing a habitat conservation plan and seeking ways to move toward more active management on the forest. The recent decision to retain the forest in public ownership includes recognizing the fiscal component of funding our schools through active timber management. Active management means some level of harvest beneficial to wildlife and rural economies. Oregon’s Division of State Lands is now posting updates specific to the Elliott Forest. The most recent posting was Oct. 13. See the post at <http://www.oregon.gov/dsl/Land/Pages/Elliott.aspx>