



CHECKING OUR BACKTRAIL

2017 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE OREGON HUNTERS ASSOCIATION

Predator plans highlight OHA's efforts in 2017

By Jim Akenson
OHA Conservation Director

OHA's conservation program and State Board Wildlife Committee in 2017 contributed extensively to support efforts that address the key elements of our mission of "Protecting Oregon's wildlife, habitat and hunting heritage." Here's a look back at some of our accomplishments.

- **Ochoco OHV Trails:** OHA has taken legal action against the Ochoco National Forest opposing this large-scale trail development of 137 miles of OHV trails in critical elk habitat. These actions center around avoiding increased disturbance affecting elk distribution on public land during hunting seasons, reducing hunter opportunity, and displacing elk from public land onto private land, where they would do damage that would result in additional kill permits.

- **Cougar Plan:** OHA was a strong voice for management expressed to the Fish and Wildlife Commission and ODFW at every opportunity during the Cougar Plan revision process. OHA emphasized the need to maintain and expand management options for cougars, including expanded target areas where warranted for big game population enhancement. The new plan will pull in more insights from local district biologists on cougar management needs to improve deer and elk survival.

- **Wolf Plan:** After two years of active stakeholder involvement, OHA is giving support to the revised Wolf Management Plan. We still need to be active partici-



Revising Oregon's Wolf Plan was a constant battle for OHA in 2017 and still continues to be.

pants in remaining public meetings, but feel comfortable that current draft plan language will apply management to wolf populations once numbers and circumstances permit the controlled hunting of wolves.

- **Winter Deer Feeding:** OHA jumped into action to save starving deer during the hard winter of 2016-17. Our efforts started with a dire situation for big game in eastern Oregon with unusually severe winter weather conditions. OHA responded by helping several landowners purchase replacement hay for those willingly helping the starving deer during unusually harsh conditions.

- **Elk Damage Response:** The issue of elk damage upon agricultural activities, especially on croplands, needs better solutions, and OHA has been actively encouraging the use of hunting as a pri-

mary management tool. OHA has been a key stakeholder participant working with ODFW, landowners, the Oregon Cattlemen's Association, and RMEF. Using hunting with responsible hunters is not a new concept for deterring elk, but the process of today is more complicated by elk ranging farther from their natural habitats and adapting effectively to a predominantly agricultural environment.

- **Elk Redistribution:** Elk experts around the West believe that attacking the distribution problem with elk will be the biggest single issue for elk and elk hunters into the next decade. OHA is involved in a major collaborative effort in the Chesnimnus Unit to move elk back onto public land – especially during hunting seasons. This will involve hunting season adjustments, hunting season road closures, and extensive habitat management actions.

- **Non-Lead Incentive Program:** OHA is participating in meetings with ODFW and other organizations to look at voluntary incentive programs for hunters trying non-lead ammunition. We are not proponents of going lead-free for big game hunting, but are interested in "incentive to try it" program ideas, similar to Arizona. We believe it's better to be an active participant than end up with a mandatory situation, such as seen in California.

- **Master Hunter Program:** OHA has met with ODFW to discuss a renovation of this program to help with big game damage situations. More meetings with stakeholders and ODFW are scheduled for 2017-18.



OHA Resource Director Ken McCall and OHA President Mike Ayers were invited when the Governor signed legislation keeping the Elliott Forest public.

OHA helped keep public lands public and accessible

By Ken McCall, OHA Resource Director

The Oregon Hunters Association was at the negotiating table in 2017 advocating for the interests of wildlife and hunters in land-use issues from the coast to Hells Canyon, and in most cases, we helped hunters hold their ground – literally.

Elliott State Forest Stays Public

In addition to the May State Land Board decision keeping the forest public, a bonding mechanism was passed to replace part of the common school fund land income lost because of endangered species reserve areas. Following the decision to keep the forest land public, Senate Bill 847 was passed and signed into law, giving the state more options on transfer of state lands than simply selling the public land assets. OHA was part of a group of outdoor hunting and fishing interests supporting the three related public land actions. Passage of Senate Bill 847 will also give the state land managers more options to consider regarding the status of more than 600,000 acres of sage lands in southeast Oregon.

Partnering for Grant Funding

OHA and the Wild Salmon Center received a Meyer Memorial Trust grant recently to establish a collaborative effort seeking a balanced management plan for the Elliott and other western Oregon state forest lands. The grant application was designed as an effort to bridge the rural/urban divide and address polarized forest resource issues prevalent around the Elliott and other western Oregon forest lands.

Gaining Ground: Metro Property Access

OHA participated in three meetings with other outdoor Metro Parks and Nature interest groups making consensus recommendations on Metro property use changes. We have advocated for a return of lost hunting opportunity on the Chehalem Ridge parcel outside Hillsboro. OHA asked for similar consideration on future Metro purchases of large parcels in rural areas around Portland. Our recommendations on hunting were well received by other interest groups and will be included in a final report submitted to the Metro Council for consideration this winter.



OHA helped marshal comments supporting expanded hunting opportunities at Baskett Slough NWR. The effort paid off with a new youth hunt.

Hunting Expanded at Baskett Slough

OHA also rallied support for a proposal to expand hunting at Baskett Slough Refuge, and a youth waterfowl hunt will be held there in the 2018-19 season.

OHA Summit with Agency Representatives

The 2017 OHA Chapter Leadership Summit was OHA's first annual leadership meeting to feature the trio of a Field, Conservation and Resource Director in addition to OHA staff from the state office. The expanded staff presence allowed the Summit attendees to more clearly focus on chapter business during the Saturday morning session, while the state board met separately. Saturday afternoon's highlight was a panel of resource professionals from ODFW, BLM and USFS, who each asked OHA to partner with their respective agencies and get more involved advocating for our mission. Sunday included presentations and information sharing among chapter and state leaders.

OHA scored big for hunters in the 2017 Legislature

By Al Elkins, OHA Lobbyist

In the final analysis, the Oregon Hunters Association had a very successful session on many fronts: getting important legislation passed, stopping some very bad bills, and putting a spotlight (pun intended) on statewide poaching prevention. OHA was also proud to participate in the Oregon Sportsmen's Caucus, helping make it a very successful and important player in the scheme of all things political.

OHA-Supported Bills That Passed

✓ HB 2566 Mentored Youth Age Limit Increase

This is an OHA-sponsored bill that increases the upper age for eligibility in Oregon's Mentored Youth Hunter Program from 14 to 16 to allow busy high school kids the chance to try hunting under the immediate supervision of a licensed adult. We encountered some opposition to the age increase in the beginning, but were able to reach a compromise. The bill goes into effect Jan. 1, 2018.

✓ HB 3158 Rewards for Reporting Poaching

This bill directs ODFW to set up an additional rewards program to report poaching. The bill goes into effect on Jan. 1, 2018.

✓ HB 2883 Outfitters and Guides Penalties

This bill increases penalties for outfitters and guides. The bill goes into effect on Jan. 1, 2018.

✓ SB 372 Wildlife Salvage Permits

The bill requires the Fish and Wildlife Commission to adopt rules for issuance of wildlife salvage permits to salvage deer or elk accidentally killed as result of vehicle collision. The bill goes into effect on Jan. 1, 2019.

✓ SB 373 Urban Deer Conflict

This bill requires ODFW to adopt a pilot program for urban deer population control. The bill passed the Senate and the House. The Governor has signed this bill. The bill goes into effect on Jan. 1, 2018.

✓ OHA-Requested ODFW Budget Note to Address Poaching

OHA wanted ODFW and other agencies to tackle the poaching problem we face in Oregon. OHA worked with various legislative members and staff to develop a budget note that was inserted into the ODFW budget. It 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."

Bill OHA Opposed That Failed

✗ SB 6 Trapping Regulations

This bill would have changed all trapping in Oregon. OHA was a member of a group that opposed the bill.



Gage Hale took this blacktail buck on a mentored hunt in the Chetco Unit. A bill introduced by OHA raised the upper age limit from 14 to 16, to allow busy high school students to participate.

2017 Session Hold-Over for Future Consideration

OHA worked with the office of Rep. Helm, D-Beaverton, on an amendment to HB 2793. This amendment addresses the issue of judges not assessing full penalties for poaching in Oregon. The amendment gives the court a bridge between the crime and penalty provisions (a tie-in) that the courts say they need.

The amendment reads:

"(12) (a) Notwithstanding ORS 153.018 and 161.635 and in addition to any other penalty authorized by law, if a person is convicted of a violation of a provision of the wildlife laws, or a rule adopted pursuant to the wildlife laws, that involves the unlawful taking of wildlife, the court may impose a fine of up to the amount of damages specified in ORS 496.705 for the wildlife that was unlawfully taken.

"(b) Moneys collected under this subsection shall be deposited in the State Wildlife Fund.

We are continuing to work with Rep. Helm on this issue.

OHA made big improvements, investments in 2017

The Oregon Hunters Association added a Resource Director position to our state-level staff in 2017, the first staff expansion in nearly two decades. The Conservation Director position was new in 2015, though the position was created by splitting the duties of the former full-time Field Administrator. The third half-time position helped OHA engage in more of the increasingly long list of issues facing Oregon's wildlife, habitat and hunting heritage.

Access & Habitat Partners

OHA set another new Access and Habitat (A&H) Statewide Elk Tag sale record income of \$50,500 at the February Columbia Basin Chapter banquet. OHA's Pronghorn Tag at the Tillamook Chapter and a second Statewide Elk Tag at the OHA State Convention generated program funds for OHA and A&H.

Three tags were secured at the July A&H meeting for our 2018 auctions: a Pronghorn Tag at the Lake County OHA banquet, a Statewide Elk Tag at Columbia County and the Statewide Deer and Elk Combo Tags to be auctioned at our 35th Annual State Convention at Seven Feathers Casino on May 12.

New OHA website launched in 2017

The Oregon Hunters Association website www.oregonhunters.org received a facelift in 2017, and now offers more features and more mobile-friendliness. Visitors can now read all of OHA's publications online, including the current issues of OREGON HUNTER magazine, OHA's monthly newsletter THE TRACKER, and our award-winning junior newsletter YEARLINGS, as well as this month of the OREGON HUNTER'S CALENDAR. Also new is a conservation page.

OHA's 2017 Investments in Our Mission

Projects benefiting Oregon's wildlife & sportsmen:	\$225,616
Publications, information & education:	\$183,813
Defending hunting rights/Advocating for wildlife:	\$106,032
Fighting poaching in Oregon:	\$32,578
Volunteer hours donated by OHA members:	34,546



OHA has raised the TIP reward amounts for informants in poaching cases, and we have helped increase penalties for poachers.

OHA made poachers pay more this year

In 2017 OHA increased the amounts of rewards from our Turn In Poachers (TIP) fund, and we set a record for the most money ever paid to informants in cases involving fish and wildlife violations.

OHA paid 56 rewards for a total of \$19,400 in 2017.

OHA and the Sportsman's Caucus plan to do more to fight poaching in 2018.

OHA grants funded important wildlife research in 2017

Funded by 5-percent contributions of OHA chapter banquet nets and the generous donations of individual OHA members exceeding \$5,000 each year, the OHA Wildlife Fund supports large-scale projects across the state.

Mt. Hood Elk Study

OHA's Wildlife Fund in 2017 granted \$10,000 to an important elk study in the Mt. Hood National Forest, where learning elk movements and habitat has become critical in the wake of proposed development in the area that could displace the elk.



Coast Cougar Study

OHA granted \$3,000 from our Wildlife Fund in 2017 to support a cougar study in the Alsea Unit. More cougars are killed in this area than any other place in the state.

