



OHA weighs in on SE Oregon Resource Management Plan



By Karl Findling, Lands Conservation Director
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The BLM Malheur Field Office is proposing to amend the 2002 Resource Management Plan (RMP) for public lands within southeast Oregon, a planning area of 4.6 million acres – larger than nine states.

A 2010 settlement agreement is the impetus for three management issues being resolved: management for lands with wilderness characteristics, OHV travel management, and grazing permittee relinquishment. Comments for other management concerns are not being considered.

OHA weighed in before the Aug. 28 public comment period deadline. OHA believes that Alternative D, created by the diverse Southeastern Oregon Resource Advisory Council, is the best balance of multiple use and protections for this vast landscape.

OHA provided substantive comments, asking BLM to consider the effects of its proposed No-Action Alternative, which follows a decades-old plan that has not shown to have made improvements in the three issues above. Declining wildlife populations and habitats in the planning area due to increased OHV use and lack of a travel management plan, massive wildfires and expansive renewable energy projects are key concerns.

OHA proposed adaptive management for lands with wilderness characteristics, and improvements were outlined in regard to the many grazing allotments not meeting adopted standards.

Anti-poaching program clears hurdle

By Al Elkins, OHA Lobbyist
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The 2019 Legislature provided general fund monies in the Oregon Department Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) budget for the development of an anti-poaching program. The new program, as outlined in HB 3087, directs ODFW, the Oregon State Police (OSP) and the Department of Justice (DOJ) to work together to increase public awareness of the impacts of poaching, increase the reporting of poaching, increase law enforcement detection of poaching and promote consistent prosecution and punishment for poaching. In essence, this is a multiple agency attack on the poaching epidemic in Oregon.

For decades OHA has been concerned about poaching in Oregon. In 2018 OHA developed a budget note establishing an “anti-poaching campaign” that was put into the ODFW budget, approved by the Fish and Wildlife Commission, submitted to the Governor. That budget note, however, was left out of the Governor’s recommended budget that was submitted to the 2019 legislature.

To ensure that discussion of the poaching epidemic was brought before the 2019 legislative body, Representatives Witt, Helm and D.B. Smith introduced HB 3087, which called for the establishment of an “anti-poaching” program within ODFW.

In April after passage by the House Committee on Natural Resources, HB 3087 was sent to Ways and Means, where OHA and other groups lobbied for general fund monies to fund the program. The Ways and Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources in May allocated \$3.7 million general fund dollars to ODFW for

the establishment of the new program.

What will this new program look like? Here is an outline of a few of the components of the new program:

- ✓ Development and placement of advertising, news stories, social media, and other content to increase awareness of poaching and generate public reporting.

- ✓ Establishment of a group of stakeholders to review advertising materials, outreach strategies, and solicit donations to support the anti-poaching efforts.

- ✓ Five new officers for the OSP to increase detection of poaching incidents and follow up on tips.

- ✓ Additional staffing and resources for the DOJ to assist in prosecuting poaching cases. This would also enable DOJ to provide assistance to district attorneys in prosecuting cases in their areas.

- ✓ Additional tools to make it easy for the public to report suspected poaching incidents. This may include a dedicated website or a mobile app to report poachers.

“Increased reporting, investigation and prosecution of poaching will send a message that Oregonians take poaching seriously,” said Roger Fuhrman, ODFW Information and Education Division Administrator. “If poachers know there is a high likelihood of getting caught and punished, they might think twice before violating the law.”

This program has been a long time coming. OHA and other representatives of hunting and fishing groups, along with legislators and representatives from ODFW, OSP and DOJ, met numerous times over the past three years to develop program ideas to aid in establishing a program that would help curtail Oregon’s poaching problem.

'We felt that ODFW staff was not interested in modifying their proposals in response to our input. Consequently, we directed our concerns to the Commission.'

OHA comments on big game regs



By Jim Akenson, OHA Sr. Conservation Director
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ODFW staff proposed major changes in big game hunting regulations for consideration by the Fish and Wildlife Commission at its Sept. 13 meeting, for which OHA State Board and staff drafted comments to present before the Commission.

Many of these changes will make the big game synopsis easier to read – an aim OHA appreciates. However, OHA has expressed concern for the rapid timing and extent of these regulation changes, and their potential impacts.

OHA was kept well apprised of the proposed changes over the past months, but, with all our opportunities for input and discussion, we felt that ODFW staff was not interested in modifying their proposals in response to our input. Consequently, we directed our concerns to the Commission, as we did successfully in regard to a proposal to eliminate a couple of coveted 600-series hunts with an any-deer bag limit for which many hunters had amassed as many as two dozen preference points.

Following are specific messages from our comments to the Commission:

➤ **General elk damage hunts:** OHA expressed concern about the season timing regarding limited access due to fire threat on private property, impact to elk herds in units below management objectives (MO), and enforcement concerns with party hunting and access for enforcement. Another concern: Will ODFW follow up with a questionnaire and field monitoring on the effectiveness of these general cow elk damage hunts? OHA's recommendation is to shorten these seasons and consider tag number caps.

➤ **Bag limit changes for blacktails:** Allowing spikes to be taken during an unlimited general-season rifle hunt does not seem consistent with Objective 4 of the 2008 Blacktail Management Plan, which states: "Manage black-tailed deer populations to attempt to achieve buck ratios and populations at benchmark levels while collecting information over the next five years to develop Management

Objectives." ODFW is conducting ongoing blacktail population research, which shows a lot of promise for improved population estimation, so why not apply the new spike regulation change to these study areas where more robust population knowledge is present to then test the effect on buck ratios of this proposed regulation change? That is OHA's recommendation.

➤ **Late-season buck hunts for Fossil, Heppner, John Day:** Late-season mule deer hunts were not evaluated on a statewide basis to determine biological feasibility and to determine the best unit locations for these hunts. Low buck MOs are established to start with in the proposed units: 12-15 bucks per 100 does.

In response, ODFW indicates that buck numbers in these units are above MOs, but failed to state how low the MOs are and acknowledge the decline in mature mule deer buck populations throughout eastern Oregon. Mature bucks are most vulnerable during the rut. OHA recommendation: Table late-season buck hunts and evaluate feasibility from a biological perspective on statewide basis and to include all users. If there is a surplus of bucks, add tags to the early buck season hunts. Given the success rate during the regular season, the number of tags could be doubled or even tripled, resulting in much more opportunity.

➤ **Much change in short order:** Will OSP enforcement be able to handle all the changes in the wake of electronic licensing going into effect? OHA recommends a slower and more methodical implementation process to allow for adjustments in administering these regulation changes and to assess problem areas, such as with enforcement and hunter crowding.

OHA reviews proposed Ochoco trails project

The nearly year-old Ochoco Trails Strategy Group recently met in Prineville with the Ochoco National Forest acceptance team. The group presented the final draft and plans, looking for the go-ahead for the three separate trail networks for the Ochoco Mountains bike trail system, a planned three-trail network with trails separating equestrian riders, hikers and

mountain bikers.

OHA and other groups are evaluating the placement and potential conflicts with wildlife. Increasing human impact on wildlife on public lands is a growing concern for OHA. —*KARL FINDLING*

OHA attends Mt. Hood Summit

August marked the 10-year anniversary of the 2009 Omnibus Act, in which Mt. Hood was a centerpiece, creating a wilderness, a National Recreation Area and other protections for the area. At the request of Congressman Blumenauer and Senator Wyden, OHA was invited to a stakeholder "summit" at Timberline Lodge. OHA noted our investment of volunteer hours and grant funds on multiple conservation projects on the mountain, and stressed the importance of continued traditional uses such as hunting in the region. —*KARL FINDLING*

OHA opposes trapping ban

By Amy Patrick, OHA Outreach Coordinator
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OHA has voiced strong opposition to a petition to ban marten trapping west of the I-5 corridor since its presentation to the ODFW Commission in August 2018. During that time we have participated with ODFW staff to produce rules changes to reflect common sense species management that does not include a sweeping ban of trapping.

OHA supports the revised rules changes proposed by ODFW staff for consideration at the September ODFW Commission meeting. The changes augment current research projects studying the Humboldt marten population by restricting marten-specific trapping in the Dunes National Recreation Area only. Trapping of other species, such as the marten's main predator, the bobcat, will not be affected. Requiring a carcass turn-in for any marten taken, including roadkill, also supports ongoing research by ODFW and other organizations.

While trapping of martens has been virtually non-existent the last three seasons, recommendations by ODFW reflect a reasonable approach to management of Oregon's wildlife while not restricting viable tools such as trapping.