

OHA TRACKER



February 2021



Many OHA chapters will feature a Christensen Arms Mesa Titanium in Coastal Farm & Ranch raffles. See schedule: <https://oregonhunters.org/events/>

Bills abound on cougars, coyotes, crossings, crossbows

And a barrage of gun control bills

By Al Elkins, OHA Lobbyist
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The 81st session of the Oregon Legislative Assembly began in mid-January, and hunters and gun owners have a lot to be concerned about. The 2021 Legislative Session is starting out virtually, with hearings being held remotely. Legislative leadership has said that while bills will be voted on and moved out of committee, no votes on bills will occur on the House or Senate floors until April or May.

The session began with over 1,800 bills already filed. Here are some of the bills that OHA will follow in 2021:

HB 2548 Wildlife Corridor Funding

Directs the Legislative Policy and Research Office to study issues related to funding construction of wildlife corridor road crossings and report to legislature its findings on or before Sept. 15, 2022.

HB 2728 Coyote Contests

It's back! However, this version has an amendment that protects certain aspects of nonprofit contests (Section 5 of the bill lines 17-19). The bill prohibits a person from conducting or participating in a contest, competition, tournament, or derby that has the objective of taking coyotes for cash or prizes. Provides that prohibition does not apply to raffles conducted by nonprofit organizations if the organization does not award raffle prizes based on number, weight or size of coyotes taken. Punishes violation of prohibition by maximum fine of \$2,000.

HB 2762 Multiyear Hunting Licenses

Directs the Fish and Wildlife Commission to establish and prescribe fees for multiyear resident and nonresident hunting licenses. Sets amount of agent fee for issuance of each multiyear license.

HB 2797 Use of Dogs to Hunt Cougars

Allows electors of a county to approve a measure allowing use of dogs for hunting, pursuing, or taking cougars within that county. The bill authorizes ODFW to issue a resident of the approving county a special cougar tag that allows use of dogs for hunting, pursuing, or taking cougars within that county.

HB 2804 Use of Crossbows

Requires ODFW to allow a person meeting certain criteria to hunt game mammals using a crossbow. The language of the bill says ODFW will allow a person possessing a valid hunting license to hunt game mammals using a crossbow if the person provides proof that: (1) The person has previously used a bow; (2) The person has a permanent physical impairment that prevents the person from holding or using a bow other than a crossbow; and (3) The person has a medical release issued by a health care professional stating that the person is physically able to hunt using a crossbow.

HB 2843 Taking Beavers on Federal Land

Prohibits taking of beavers on federally managed public land, as waters flow through federally managed public land or in pond, lake or water storage facility on federally managed public land. Exempts taking of beaver by employees of federal land management agencies to address conflict related to infrastructure. ODFW is directed to adopt any rules necessary to implement prohibition.

SB 592 Lead Shot Prohibition Bill

Prohibits using lead shotgun pellets for hunting. Also prohibits using lead weight in waters of this state for angling or commercial fishing.

SB 630 Elk Damage Tag Bill

Authorizes the use of landowner damage tags to take elk on adjacent property with consent of the owner of the adjacent property.

SB 637 Nuisance Game Mammal Meat

Allows a person taking certain nuisance game mammals to retain game meat if meat is offered to charitable organizations and refused.

Gun Bills

OHA is following several gun control bills:

HB 2510 Mandatory Lock Up

Requires the owner or possessor of firearm to secure the firearm with trigger or cable lock, in a locked container or in a gun room except in specified circumstances.

HB 2543 Firearm Transfer Prohibition

Prohibits transfer of firearms by gun dealers or private parties if OSP is unable to determine whether recipient is qualified to receive a firearm.

SB 396 Undetectable Firearm Prohibition

Prohibits "undetectable firearms," which include "ghost guns" constructed to avoid detection by devices used at security check points.

SB 554 Concealed Weapon Laws

Authorizes city, county, metropolitan service district, port operating commercial airport, school district, college, or university to adopt ordinances or policies limiting or precluding affirmative defense for possession of firearms in public buildings by concealed handgun licensees.

SB 585 Repeals Preemption Law

Repeals Oregon's preemption law allowing any locality to create and enforce any gun law they choose.

SB 604 Permit to Purchase Firearms

The bill requires a permit to purchase firearms. The bill requires mandatory training, background checks, and fees. The bill requires safety training from the "National Firearms Association" (bill language). The permit must be renewed every 5 years.

To learn more about these bills, visit www.oregonlegislature.gov/bills_laws

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OHA to be active in updating Oregon's mule deer plan

By Mike Totey, OHA Conservation Director
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Work will begin in 2021 to update Oregon's Mule Deer Management Plan. The current plan was adopted in 2003, and since that time, a lot has happened with mule deer in Oregon.

Over the last 18 years since the current plan was adopted, mule deer populations and buck ratios have, overall, dropped significantly. Using the latest population estimates from 2019, 92 percent of the 49 units have population estimates well below the approved objectives, with more than half below 50 percent. The same population estimate also shows buck ratio numbers in 76 percent of units below the approved objective or with decreasing numbers. Reductions in hunting opportunities have become a trend based on the declining population data.

Oregon mule deer populations face numerous limiting factors. Human development and some land management practices have led to significant declines

in mule deer habitat. Predation, vehicle collisions and competition with other wildlife have all affected deer populations, as well.

In 2009, ODFW created the Mule Deer Initiative (MDI) to assist in addressing the problems affecting mule deer populations. Pilot units in the MDI saw positive results from cougar removal, juniper thinning, reduced tag numbers and increased law enforcement. But we're not hearing much about the MDI lately, nor satisfactory responses to our questions about why that is.

As a direct result of the MDI's recommendations, the department has taken steps to reduce hunt opportunities by decreasing unit tag numbers over the last decade. Based on continued decreases in population thresholds, the department reduced tag allocations on 24 mule deer hunts for 2020, covering both buck and antlerless deer series.

Now ODFW has made the eastern Oregon deer archery season all controlled

hunting beginning this year. 🍷 🍷

Not only would an updated Mule Deer Management Plan give us the opportunity to address these factors, it would also benefit from the incorporation of the many substantive studies and aerial surveys that have been conducted by ODFW, as well as several other entities, such as GPS collaring studies that have identified migration patterns, stopover areas, and complete barriers to animal movement. It would also allow the department to take into consideration the numerous impacts that were not on the landscape 18 years ago, such as power production sites, land development projects, and the effects of climate change. Many of these factors have increased exponentially in the last two decades, which makes the decreasing mule deer population an increasingly necessary topic to address.

OHA will be engaged in the development of the updated Mule Deer Management Plan at every opportunity. This will be one of our highest priorities for 2021.

State wolf management is a big step

By Tyler Dungannon, Conservation Coordinator
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Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife and Oregon's tribes are now charged with managing gray wolves following the federal delisting of the species by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. If you're an outdoorsman, chances are, when you came across this news last October, your ears perked up like an apex predator reacting to a bugle from an adjacent ridge.

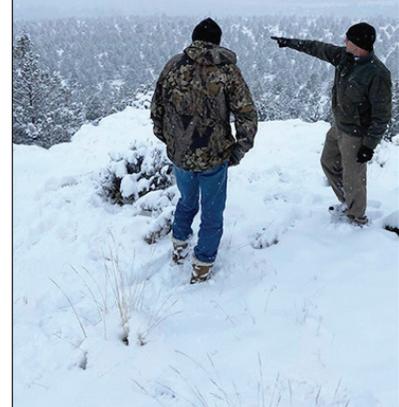
How does the federal delisting impact Oregon hunters? In the interim, hunters may see little to no impact of this action (i.e., hunting and trapping of wolves is still prohibited, and wolves likely won't be intensively managed in the immediate future). However, this was a necessary step to allow ODFW biologists to more effectively manage all wildlife, and the door is slowly opening for management action by ODFW in response to wolves' adverse impacts on other species. Specifically, if wolves are suppressing ungulate populations, and those populations are not meeting established management objectives in a given wildlife management

unit, ODFW may soon (with Commission approval) have the authority to lethally remove problem wolves in eastern Oregon where we are in Phase III of the Wolf Plan (more than seven breeding pairs for three consecutive years). This action will likely take a bit longer in western Oregon, where wolves are still in Phase I (less than four breeding pairs for three consecutive years).

Wolves will continue to have a ripple effect on ecological communities, and there are many potential scenarios across the state where wolves could directly or indirectly have a negative impact on game species.

Following the federal delisting, ODFW now has the reins to ensure that wolf management in Oregon reflects the state's ungulate populations and hunting opportunity. OHA worked tirelessly against loud opposition to ensure that when this day came, and the state was able to manage wolves on its own, Oregon would have a wolf management plan with some teeth to protect our ungulate populations.

OHA stepping up for Oregon's mule deer



OHA Conservation staff recently visited a central Oregon property for which OHA now holds a conservation easement. The property is considered mule deer winter range, and OHA will enhance and maintain the property to suit mule deer and other wildlife. Conservation staff are currently working on a management plan, and will work with ODFW to ensure this property will provide long term, quality habitat for mule deer in the winter.