



# CHECKING OUR BACKTRAIL

2021 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE OREGON HUNTERS ASSOCIATION

## OHA Moved Mountains for Conservation in 2021

The OHA conservation staff and board members from OHA's Wildlife-Lands Committee have continued to work on a number of priority issues throughout 2021. COVID-19 restricted in-person meetings, but did nothing to slow the onslaught of conservation issues, so OHA used every means available to weigh in.

OHA's new conservation staff were left holding the reins as Jim Akenson, former senior conservation director, retired from the staff, and eventually moved into the Northeast Oregon State Board position.

Continued conversations on elk archery regulation changes in eastern Oregon and executing OHA's first-ever conservation easement dominated the early part of the year. Ongoing work on safe wildlife passage structures, ungulate migration, and providing OHA's perspective on federal land management projects and ODFW wildlife management area plans were all priorities in 2021.

### OHA Launches New Expert Advisory Council

This past year saw the startup of an OHA Advisory Council, the first of its kind for our organization. The Advisory Council is comprised of wildlife experts from a range of backgrounds.

The group has been instrumental in providing input, advice and direct contributions to a number of conservation and legislative issues.



From funding fencing for the new Highway 97 wildlife underpass to seeding a burned area on our new conservation easement in central Oregon, OHA stepped up everywhere for conservation in 2021.

### OHA Plays Key Roles in Trapping Workgroups, Conservation Coalitions

OHA conservation staff invested considerable time on two newly formed Fish and Wildlife Commission work groups. These groups are working on two long-time issues that the Fish and Wildlife Commission have been addressing: beaver management on federal lands, and trap-check intervals. The work groups have been challenging to say the least, as the underlying tone within both groups has been dominated by organizations aimed at further restricting or eliminating trapping in any way they can.

Work to conserve and protect the places that provide valuable wildlife habitat and where we hunt continued in 2021,

with OHA's involvement in the Owyhee Sportsman Coalition, the Elliott State Forest planning, and the fund-raising efforts for the Minam property acquisition.

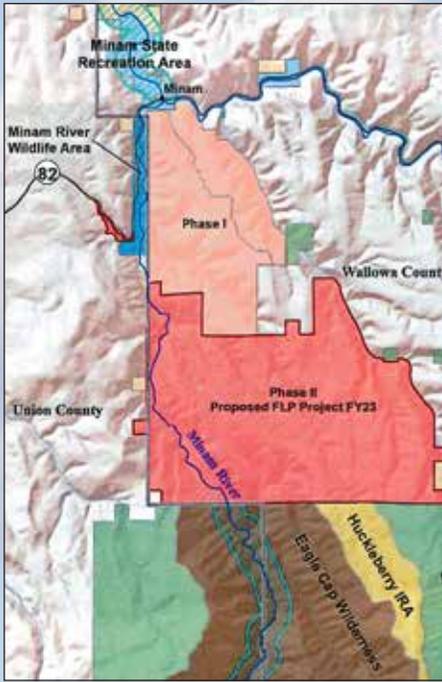
### OHA Secures, Enhances Conservation Easement

OHA completed the first iteration of our Potter Conservation Easement Management Plan, and that plan was almost immediately updated to include restoration expectations after the Grandview Fire burned a corner of the property in August. 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 will work with ODFW to ensure this property will provide long-term, quality habitat for mule deer.

SUMPTER/DUANE DUNGANNON

Updating Oregon's Mule Deer Plan will be a major focus for OHA in 2022.





COURTESY RMF

The land acquisition will connect the Minam Wildlife Area and Eagle Cap Wilderness Area.

## OHA Contributed to Key Minam Land Acquisition

In 2021, an opportunity to make a truly lasting impact on wildlife, conservation, and hunting access came along when the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, ODFW, and Hancock Forest Management came together to negotiate the acquisition of more than 15,500 acres of critical elk winter range that is strategically located between the Eagle Cap Wilderness and the existing Minam River Wildlife Management Area.

The first part of the two-phase acquisition, totaling over 4,600 acres, is scheduled to close in late 2021. Early in 2021, a call came out to help raise money for this first acquisition phase, and OHA chapters stepped up to the plate. By September, chapters had pledged over \$100,000 toward the acquisition – a remarkable achievement given the current constraints on chapter fund-raising.

## OHA Stepped up Again for Safe Wildlife Migration

OHA asserted itself this year as a leader in wildlife passage efforts across the state. OHA identified several areas in need

of wildlife passage, and we are assisting agencies to prioritize crossing structures across Oregon so our state is competitive in receiving federal funding for wildlife crossings. We were instrumental in assisting Oregon Wildlife Foundation sell 3,000 Watch for Wildlife license plate vouchers needed to get the plate into production. These license plates will ultimately provide funding for wildlife crossings and projects aimed at improving habitat connectivity for wildlife.

## OHA Weighed in on Elk Archery Changes for 2022

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife released its initial strategy for moving a bigger portion of eastern Oregon archery elk hunts to a controlled hunt system in the spring of 2021. This was a continuation of a process and proposal that actually began in 2020, but was deferred to 2021 to allow more input and further refinement. ODFW issued a release that described the proposal, along with a map, and a process for hunters to provide their input.

OHA continued to track this proposal and participate in multiple discussions with the ODFW staff charged with leading the review. OHA representatives reviewed data and information on the current elk archery hunting, assessed potential impacts of the proposal, participated in sport group meetings, and worked hard to make sure our members had an opportunity to engage in the discussion, including an OHA-specific meeting with ODFW staff on the proposal.

Jeremy Thompson, ODFW District Wildlife Biologist from The Dalles, served as the agency lead for the process. In a release from ODFW, Jeremy stated, “We have tried to craft a solution that addresses the problems we are seeing in some units, while continuing to retain as much general-season opportunity as possible. We recognize that any change we propose will impact hunters, but we will also be impacting hunters if we do not make a change.”

In the end, the Fish and Wildlife Commission adopted rules that moved 11 units and two combined-unit zones to controlled hunts for archery elk. Changes made on the elk archery seasons will be implemented for the 2022 hunting season.



RYAN HOEFT

OHA's in-person and online courses and resources are helping newcomers learn to hunt.

## OHA Helped Advance Learn to Hunt Program

OHA's 2021 outreach efforts have centered around the creation of our new Learn to Hunt Program. Championed by Kelly Parkman, president of the Hoodview Chapter, the Learn to Hunt Program (LTH) is targeted toward recruiting new hunters with beginner in-person and online courses, online hunting resources, and an interactive communication system with students and members.

OHA staff and board members have worked on the program for over a year to craft course curriculum and create the online educational component, while the Hoodview Chapter has piloted the in-person courses and hands-on field trips for new students.

The program continues to evolve and should be ready for expanded chapter involvement and implementation in early 2022.

## OHA Reaching out to Oregon's Landowners

OHA is creating a simple yet effective outreach tool to help chapters contact local landowners. The Landowner Outreach Letter is derived from a similar letter drafted by the Mid-Willamette Chapter to thank landowners for allowing public access on their lands. A letter template and implementation guidelines have been drafted and will also be available to chapters in early 2022.

# OHA fought hunting ban, gun control petitions in '21

Initiative Petitions that threaten hunting and gun ownership have been filed and are collecting signatures for the 2022 ballot, and OHA and our allies are already working to defeat them.

## Initiative Petition 13:

OHA successfully submitted comments challenging the ballot language and making it more clear that this radical petition would criminalize hunting, fishing, and trapping in Oregon. Additionally, this petition would outlaw slaughtering livestock, transporting livestock, raising commercial poultry, rodeos and similar events, wildlife conservation practices, good husbandry practices, training practices, education and research with animals, and pest control. It even goes so far as to reclassify common breeding practices, such as artificial insemination or castration, as sexual assault.

The petitioners have until July 8 to collect 112,020 signatures to place the initiative on the ballot. OHA is working doubly hard on this issue with two different coalitions to create No on IP13 campaigns. We have also created a page on our website specific to this topic with the intent of keeping our members and others updated on the topic.

## Initiative Petitions 17 & 18:

Two gun control initiatives aimed for the November 2022 ballot have been filed with the Oregon Attorney General:

- **IP17** - Prohibits the use and possession of ammunition magazines that hold more than 10 rounds.

- **IP18** - Prohibits manufacturing, possessing, and transferring many semi-automatic firearms and creates a new gun permit system. OHA submitted a letter about IP17 to the Attorney General stating that the petition violates the constitutional provision that initiatives only address one subject. OHA also sent a letter to the Attorney General on IP18 that in part stated: "IP18 also purports to prohibit the use of covered firearms for practice and target shooting expressly permitted under federal law on federal public lands such as the national forests and BLM lands, which comprise almost 50 percent of Oregon's land. The Draft Ballot Title does

## OHA's 2021 Investments in Our Mission

Projects benefiting Oregon's wildlife & sportsmen:	\$205,811
Publications, information & education:	\$237,812
Defending hunting rights/Advocating for wildlife:	\$176,780
Fighting poaching in Oregon:	\$18,400
Volunteer hours donated by OHA members:	11,746

not inform voters of this radical, indeed unprecedented effect of IP18."

OHA is working closely with gun advocate groups to stop these two petitions.

## OHA Passed 2 Key Bills in 2021 Legislative Session

Some 1,800 plus bills were introduced during the 2021 Oregon Legislative session, and OHA tracked close to 400 of them. It was an intense legislative session to say the least, with all hearings, testimony and work sessions done virtually.

OHA had two bills that we requested and passed on the last days of the session. We are happy to report that both bills will become law in 2022 (see below). One bill dealt with Oregon residency requirements for purposes of licenses, tags, and permits related to wildlife. The second bill allows ODFW the authority to operate wildlife inspection stations to prevent the spread of disease and to collect information related to wildlife management efforts.

In the bill mix were several bills that OHA fought to defeat. The banning of coyote contests in Oregon, the prohibition on beaver trapping on federally managed public lands and the banning of the use of lead shot were just a few of the bills that OHA fought vigorously and that did not pass.

Bills that OHA helped pass included the wildlife corridor funding bill, the establishment of a new Habitat Division within ODFW and the full funding for the anti-poaching program.

In addition to the many hunting, wild-

life, and habitat bills, there were numerous gun bills that OHA opposed. After months of rumors and hearings, two gun bills were combined, passed, and signed by the Governor. Hunters should pay close attention to the provisions of this bill for safe transportation, transfers and use by minors. The implications are still subject to interpretation.

## New laws will go into effect in 2022

### • HB 3152 Wildlife Inspection Points:

This OHA-sponsored bill gives ODFW authority to operate wildlife inspection points for purposes of preventing the spread of infections or infestations harmful to wildlife and to further wildlife management efforts.

### • HB 3163 Residency Requirements:

This OHA-sponsored bill makes a change in residency requirements for purposes of licenses, tags, and permits related to wildlife. Through discussions with law enforcement, it was discovered that prosecuting offenders with dual state residencies had become a concern of Oregon District Attorneys, and they had become reluctant to prosecute wildlife offenders that fit into the dual state category. The new language in the bill changes the residency definition so that a resident is a person who has physically resided in Oregon for not less than six consecutive months immediately prior to the date of making application for a license, tag, or permit issued by the State Fish and Wildlife Commission. It further defines a resident as not someone who merely owns real property or pays property taxes in this state; or who has resident privileges in another state or county for any purpose.