



**Last call for OHA's 40th Anniversary State Convention on May 6 at Chinook Winds Casino in Lincoln City! Call 541-772-7313.**

## OHA bills clear early deadline

By Amy Patrick, OHA Policy Director  
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The first major deadline of the 2023 legislative session passed on March 17, when bills had to be scheduled for a work session in their committee of origin to stay alive, with a few exceptions.

Here's a brief report on key bills:

- OHA's bill seeking funding for the establishment of in-state testing for Chronic Wasting Disease (HB 2532) and increased sample collection and research was passed out of its original committee with a "do pass" recommendation. It is still in play and awaiting a hearing in the Joint Ways & Means Committee.

- OHA's bill seeking a referendum to the 2024 ballot for a Constitutional amendment that would protect the right to fish, hunt, harvest, and gather (HJR 5) is still in play and awaiting a work session in the House Rules Committee.

- The bills to reform the Fish & Wildlife Commission makeup have been winnowed into one remaining bill (HB 3086) which will have a public hearing on March 28. OHA is leading the efforts to reform the representative structure from congressional districts to a more regionally equitable model based on the five river basin management areas.

- All six bills, in both the House and Senate, that were attempting to bring back the use of hounds related to cougar hunting have died. Likewise, the bill that sought to further restrict the use of hounds on bobcat and lynx is also dead.

- Both bills that would have legalized hunting with crossbows have died.

The next deadline is April 4, when bills must have work sessions completed.

## Governor, legislators back gun bill package

Governor Kotek announced a package of three bills, HB 2005, HB 2006, and HB 2007, that are endorsed by her office and deemed a priority by the Attorney General's office.

- HB 2005 would criminalize so-called "ghost guns" and restrict the manufacturing of firearms by individuals. While this bill is aimed at tracking non-serialized firearms, its unfortunate consequences impact hobbyists who build and repair firearms.

- HB 2006 would restrict the purchase and ownership of certain firearms, specifically semi-automatic firearms, for Oregonians aged 18-21.

- HB 2007 increases ability of public entities to restrict the freedom of individuals to carry concealed weapons.

All three bills were presented as a package in public hearings the week of March 20. Several legislators signaled support for the bills, particularly Rep. Kropf (D-Bend), chair of the House Judiciary Committee, and Sen. Prozanski (D-Eugene), chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee. Both expressed support for combining them into one all-encompassing bill with amendments that have not been made public.

OHA provided testimony opposing the direct impact the age restriction will have on youth hunting and young adults' ability to possess and use semi-automatic firearms, particularly for waterfowl hunting. OHA will continue to engage this pack of bills as the session progresses.

## OHA continues to fight CWD

By Mike Totey, Conservation Director  
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With the discovery of Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) just across the border in Idaho in the fall of 2021, OHA and ODFW have ramped up efforts in Oregon to try to prevent and detect the disease.

Previous planning and legislation in Oregon allowed ODFW to set up mandatory check stations and develop procedures for testing Oregon's deer and elk, and also prevent a potentially infected animal that was harvested out of state from contaminating our local wildlife. Check stations and sampling really began in earnest last fall. More than 2,600 samples have been taken from harvested and salvaged deer and elk in Oregon since July 1, 2022. The good news is that there have been no detections of CWD in Oregon.

This is only the beginning, though.

Early detection is key in minimizing the impacts to our deer and elk herds. OHA has introduced legislation (HB 2532) to help boost the testing of samples collected here. Currently, all samples are sent to Colorado for analysis. Because other states are doing the same thing, samples get backlogged and results are slow to get reported.

Having an in-state testing facility at Oregon State University will expedite our results from testing and allow faster responses from ODFW if CWD is detected in Oregon.

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# OHA SW Cascade Project April 15



By Tyler Dungannon, Conservation Coordinator  
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OHA and partners are working to protect and enhance meadow systems near Butte Falls in the West Cascade and Klamath Mountain Ecoregions for the benefit of wildlife, habitat, and hunters. Meadow systems are important to deer and elk, and across the western Cascades, meadows are at risk of loss, degradation and fragmentation due to conifer encroachment, heavy use by domestic livestock, illegal OHV use, wildfire suppression and other factors.

OHA and partners will protect three areas in the Cascade Mountains (Willow Prairie, Short Creek, and Whiskey Springs/Fourbit) with 6.5 total miles of wildlife-friendly fencing to restore the resiliency of these mesic systems and provide habitat for wildlife.

OHA conservation staff are working to procure a \$50,000 grant for this project, and in the interim, the Medford Water Commission has purchased ~\$6,000 worth of fencing materials that OHA will install on USFS land near Whiskey Springs on April 15. Camping at Whiskey Springs will be available for project volunteers only. Assisting with this project should dovetail nicely with a turkey hunt on Saturday and/or Sunday morning.

For more information, contact Tyler Dungannon ([td@oregonhunters.org](mailto:td@oregonhunters.org)).

## Overcrossings in SW Oregon hit the fast lane

By Tyler Dungannon, Conservation Coordinator  
[TD@oregonhunters.org](mailto:TD@oregonhunters.org)

OHA conservation staff and other representatives for the Southern Oregon Wildlife Crossing Coalition recently met with ODOT Transportation Project Manager Dan Roberts and 17 additional

ODOT staffers to officially kick off project implementation for two wildlife overpasses on Interstate 5 south of Ashland. ODOT outlined a progressive schedule that aims to complete all survey, design and engineering work for the overcrossings and fencing by the end of 2024.

Survey work will begin on the overcrossing structures soon, likely within the next 4-6 weeks at the Mariposa Preserve (Mile Post 1.4), and Barron Creek (Mile Post 8.7) thereafter. ODOT will have a number of traffic challenges to tackle, ranging from relatively simple issues, such as lighting in the tunnels, to very complex questions, such as whether the structures should be wide enough to allow for additional traffic lane construction in the future.

OHA conservation staff have established a role on the overpass project design team to ensure these passage structures efficiently facilitate movement and safe passage of ungulates and other wildlife. The next progress meeting will likely be in May. —*TYLER DUNGANNON*

## C. Oregon safe crossing projects moving forward

By Mike Totey, Conservation Director  
[mtotey@oregonhunters.org](mailto:mtotey@oregonhunters.org)

The Bend to Suttle Lake Wildlife Passage Initiative (B2S) is a new central Oregon coalition of state and federal agencies, nonprofit partners, and community leaders working to improve wildlife passage and motorist safety along Highway 20 between Bend and Suttle Lake. OHA has been a partner in a number of these coalitions across the state, and the B2S coalition is another example of how we can help protect mule deer and elk in a key area of our state.

Highway 20 between Bend and Suttle Lake has the highest density of mule deer and elk wildlife-vehicle collisions in the entire state. From Bend, this section of highway travels through the communities of Tumalo, Plainview, Cloverdale, Sisters, Tollgate, and Black Butte Ranch. Individuals traveling and commuting along this stretch of Highway 20 face

an increased risk of colliding with large animals, posing a serious risk to human life, property and wildlife.

Currently the coalition is seeking grant funding to complete a feasibility study to identify priority wildlife crossing site locations, assess site conditions, and evaluate crossing designs and configurations along the 35-mile stretch of Highway 20 between Bend and Suttle Lake. The feasibility study will include a more detailed planning and structural design process for a wildlife crossing site near Indian Ford Creek at the base of Black Butte. Oregon Department of Transportation carcass collection data and the recently completed Oregon Conservation and Mapping Project have identified this site as a priority location for wildlife passage in the area, particularly for mule deer and elk.



## OHA SPRING BANQUETS

|         |                                |                  |
|---------|--------------------------------|------------------|
| TBD     | Emerald Valley                 |                  |
| Apr. 1  | Tioga                          | <b>SOLD OUT!</b> |
| Apr. 8  | Umpqua                         | 541-580-5660     |
| Apr. 15 | Mid-Willamette                 | <b>SOLD OUT!</b> |
| Apr. 22 | Capitol                        | 503-851-8409     |
| Apr. 29 | Blue Mountain                  | 541-231-4384     |
| Apr. 29 | Klamath                        | 541-884-5773     |
| May 6   | Tillamook                      | 503-801-3779     |
| May 6   | OHA 40th State Convention,     |                  |
|         | Chinook Winds Casino,          | 541-772-7313     |
| May 20  | Lake County                    | 541-219-0614     |
| June 3  | Rogue Valley                   | 541-773-8736     |
|         | A&H Statewide Deer Tag auction |                  |
|         | A&H Statewide Elk Tag auction  |                  |

