



UNION COUNTY/JIM WARD

## IP3 proponents eye 2026 ballot

*Over 30,000 signatures have been collected*

By Amy Patrick, OHA Policy Director  
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Proponents of IP3 have gathered almost 31,000 signatures in their efforts to put the egregious, ridiculous, and downright offensive initiative petition that would ban legal hunting, fishing, and trapping on the 2024 ballot.

In addition to prohibiting hunting, fishing, and trapping, the initiative would also criminalize wildlife management efforts, education and research with animals, and even trapping vermin, such as mice and gophers. It would also effectively end farming, ranching, and eating Oregon-grown animal products such as meat, dairy and seafood.

However, even with an influx of funding received earlier this year, and the initial efforts to gain the signature threshold (120,000) to make the ballot, it appears the proponents are now looking to the 2026 election.

Initiative Petition 28 (IP28) has been filed with the Secretary of State for the 2026 ballot and is a new iteration of the language that began as IP13 in 2020 and returned as IP3 in 2022. With few substantial changes, IP28 rolls forward the IP3 efforts to 2026 and gives them three years to continue their plans to take this extreme agenda to Oregonians.

OHA continues to lead the opposition to this proposed measure, so stay tuned for more information.



METOLIUS BUCK/JIM YUSKAVITCH

*The Metolius area provides critical winter range habitat for central Oregon mule deer.*

## OHA joins Metolius land coalition

By Mike Totey, Conservation Director  
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A group of wildlife professionals, agency staff and conservation organizations have formed a coalition to address the bigger picture of the winter range conservation needs in the Metolius area. This group includes representatives from OHA, ODFW, BLM, Crooked River National Grasslands, PGE, Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs, Deschutes Land Trust, and others. The purpose of the group has been the long-term conservation of the area for wintering mule deer and other wildlife.

The group has identified key private lands parcels that are important for mule deer migration, habitat connectivity and winter range. When any of these parcels become available on the market, efforts are made to conserve them.

The most recent example was the purchase of multiple parcels that became available. The group worked with a "conservation buyer" to secure the

property before they were sold to another party that perhaps would not prioritize conservation of the lands. A conservation buyer is a person or entity with the liquid cash available to purchase and hold the property while conservation groups, in this case the winter range coalition, raises the cash to purchase the property.

In the end, the lands could be conveyed to a public agency or other entity with the assurance that the lands will be open to the public, conserved as winter range, and available for hunting. The group is now trying to raise over \$400,000 to complete this latest transaction.

OHA secured its first conservation easement in January 2021. This was in recognition of the conservation needs in a key area of winter range for the Metolius mule deer herd. While OHA's work is important and valuable for the wintering mule deer, it is only a tiny portion the bigger winter range geographic area that is critical for the mule deer and their survival.

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# OHA wraps up multi-year sage and bitterbrush planting project

By Tyler Dungannon, Conservation Coordinator  
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OHA and partnering contractors planted more than 5,500 antelope bitterbrush seedlings in the Bootleg fire scar north of Bly in mid-October. This recent planting effort increased our total planted sage and bitterbrush seedlings to 15,575 in the Interstate Unit in 2022 and 2023. These plants were strategically planted on mule deer winter range within primary wildlife connectivity areas outlined by ODFW.

The Interstate Unit has seen unprecedented wildfire frequency and intensity in the last decade, and over a half-million acres burned in the unit in 2021 alone.

In response, OHA conservation staff pursued and attained external grant funding, and rallied support for this project while collaborating with more than a dozen partners.

This project supported Institute for Applied Ecology's Sagebrush in Prisons Project, which provides incarcerated adults the opportunity to grow native plants from seed to help restore native habitat for wildlife. Institute for Applied

Ecology staff and Adults in Custody enrolled in the Sagebrush and Prisons Project grew all of the sage and bitterbrush seedlings that OHA planted. Adults in custody also got their boots dirty planting roughly 1,000 seedlings in November 2022 and April 2023.

This project was made possible by OHA conservation staff, OHA chapters and our partners. Oregon Conservation and Recreation Fund awarded OHA a grant of \$23,000, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation awarded \$10,000, OHA's Klamath Chapter provided \$5,500, OHA's Lake County Chapter gave \$5,000, and State OHA contributed \$3,000 from our Wildlife Superfund.

OHA thanks the numerous OHA volunteers around the state who made the trip to the Interstate Unit to plant and protect sage and bitterbrush.

Project Partners: Oregon Conservation and Recreation Fund, Institute for Applied Ecology, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, USFS, ODFW, BLM, Legacy Sports International, Ecopoint, Inc., Benchmade, Sig Sauer, Backcountry Hunters & Anglers, Coast and Work Sharp.

## McDonald's Ferry now in public hands

By Mike Totey, Conservation Director  
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With private land occupying much of the landscape on the lower part of the John Day River, access for river rafting, hunting and fishing have been limited. The Western Rivers Conservancy (WRC), with financial assistance from other partners like onX, recently secured access to a 4,054-acre parcel known as McDonald's Ferry Ranch.

The parcel has served as "the last takeout" for rafters, a productive landscape for chasing chukar, and taking in some moments of Oregon Trail history. WRC conveyed the property to the Bureau of Land Management on Aug. 30. While the management plans are yet to be finalized, hunters and other users can expect that the property will fall under the

BLM's plan for the John Day as a whole. OHA had earlier submitted comments in support of this transaction.

Not only does this provide for public access to the former ranch property, it also allows public access to other existing BLM parcels that were essentially landlocked because they were surrounded by private property.

According to an onX post, "The John Day River is the longest undammed river west of the Rockies and is designated Wild and Scenic. From its headwaters in the Strawberry Mountains near Prairie City, the river runs unencumbered nearly 284 miles through archaeological sites, historical areas, and canyons. The riparian areas are filled with bighorn sheep, deer, game birds, rattlesnakes, coyotes, and countless other species."

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