



JUNE 2024

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Commission selects new ODFW director

By Amy Patrick, OHA Policy Director
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After a nearly five-month process, the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission selected the next ODFW director at its May 10 meeting. Debbie Colbert, previously the deputy director of the agency, has been selected to take the helm following Curt Melcher’s retirement earlier this year.

The Commission’s selection committee on May 3 announced the names of the four potential candidates and selected two to move forward in the final selection process before the Commission on May 10. The other candidate put forward was Katelyn Lovell, an environmental lawyer employed by the City of Portland. After a short public meeting and a six-hour executive session, the Commission returned with an offer of employment to Colbert.

Director Colbert has a deep resume in wildlife management with many years of previous experience with ODFW and Oregon State University. She holds a bachelor of science in biology, a master’s in oceanography, and a doctorate in interdisciplinary oceanography, giving her an extensive science-based background.

In addition to her impressive background, Director Colbert possesses a strong understanding of the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation and a deep appreciation of the role hunters and anglers play both in conservation and in funding the agency.

OHA looks forward to working with Director Colbert as we work to promote healthy wildlife populations, protect and improve important habitat, and ensure Oregon’s hunting heritage is sustained.

OHA helps shape mule deer plan

By Tyler Dunganon, Conservation Coordinator
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OHA has been calling for a substantial revision to Oregon’s Mule Deer Management Plan for several years. ODFW began working on the new plan in 2022, and throughout the process, OHA staff and its deer committee sent 10 separate comment letters that have helped shape the plan for the benefit of mule deer and hunters.

The goal of the plan is to provide a framework to improve conditions for mule deer and ultimately reverse the species’ decline. In particular, the plan can serve as a guide for natural resource agencies and landowners to create conditions that benefit mule deer.

OHA recognizes that the new mule deer plan was a considerable lift for ODFW, but initially, the first draft of the plan fell short of the plan’s goal.

Broadly, the plan did not express the dire situation that mule deer populations are enduring to land managers, developers, elected officials and other entities capable of assisting or hindering mule deer. Following OHA’s comments, ODFW integrated language that better reflects the drastic conditions on the landscape for mule deer, and this will help our efforts to reverse population declines.

Habitat and Nutrition: OHA provided specific, additional language to ensure mule deer and their habitat needs are considered in land use planning processes.

Parasites and Disease: OHA has long supported ODFW’s effort to prevent and ultimately limit the prevalence of chronic wasting disease in Oregon. ODFW thoroughly addressed our concerns in this

chapter, though we requested ODFW include a strategy to increase hunter awareness for those who travel between Oregon and CWD states.

Predation: OHA was generally supportive of ODFW’s language regarding efforts to determine impacts of predation on mule deer, but we disagreed with language in the draft plan that appears to hamstring the agency in implementing target areas or other efforts to remove predators for the benefit of mule deer. OHA will continue to support predator removal efforts in areas where conditions are conducive to achieving a positive mule deer population response.

Harvest Management: Management objectives are considerably different in the new mule deer management plan. OHA expressed deep concern in reducing our population size goals in the name of making them more realistic. However, we are encouraged that ODFW will now use cutting edge population models to determine population growth rates in conjunction with population size estimates to discern mule deer herd range management concern levels.

OHA also provided comments on the plan’s executive summary, anthropogenic (man-made) impacts, poaching, specific herd range reports, and mule deer population monitoring. ODFW did not incorporate all of our comments, but those that were included have certainly enhanced this plan as a tool that ODFW, OHA and others can use to address mule deer declines. OHA has put a tremendous amount of work into shaping this plan, and now we will turn our attention to plan implementation.



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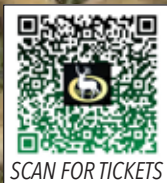
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SCAN FOR TICKETS

Howl for Wildlife becomes key ally for OHA's mission

By Amy Patrick, OHA Policy Director
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In recent legislative sessions, nothing has been more effective for Oregon's sportsmen and women than Howl For Wildlife. Howl, as it's commonly known, turns the tactics commonly used by opposition groups on their ear by making them accessible to the hunting community, allowing individuals to easily engage on important wildlife management decisions through emails or phone calls.

What makes the platform different is the ability to generate incredibly unique emails, including subject lines. Distinct individual emails get read, while the standard form letter emails are easily deleted or sent to junk email folders.

OHA has worked with Howl For Wildlife on multiple legislative pieces:

- HB 3390, the bill to criminalize the sale or trade of fur: Howl engaged an action alert generating 1,110 interactions in which unique emails were sent to the 10 members of the House Judiciary Committee. Those 11,100 emails helped kill the bill before it received a hearing.

- HJR 5, the referendum to send a constitutional protection to fish and hunt to the 2024 ballot, was supported through Howl with 11,564 emails to the members of the House Rules Committee. While that bill did not pass, the amount of emails received by committee members was repeatedly noted.

- HB 3086, the bill to reform the ODFW Commission: Howl engaged three times on the bill, totaling 50,941 emails to committees and legislators. The emails helped push the bill over the finish line in the final hours of the session.

- Howl generated an action alert on HB 4148, producing over 31,000 emails in support of our efforts to secure funding for Chronic Wasting Disease monitoring and testing.

Find Howl at howlforwildlife.org. Check out their Action Den and podcast to get updated on what's happening around the country and how you can engage. Become a Howl member and choose from several great memberships.



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