



KELCEY STOLLER

Young guns sharpened their shooting skills just in time for game bird seasons at the OHA Yamhill County annual youth shotgun shoot on Aug. 16.

## OHA weighs in on Blue Mt plan • OHA stands up for sage grouse

By Mike Totey, Conservation Director  
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OHA and our allies are organizing opposition to proposed National Forest management plans for the Blue Mountains that fall well short of providing for abundant deer and elk populations.

In 2023, the US Forest Service announced it would be updating the forest management plans for the three national forests in northeast Oregon. The Umatilla National Forest, Malheur National Forest, and Wallowa-Whitman National Forest are all included in a project titled “The Blue Mountains Forest Plan Revision.” These national forests total 5.5 million acres of public lands that are critical for elk, deer, and numerous other species.

OHA has been looking forward to this process for some time, because these are some of our most valuable game habitat and hunting areas in the state. Unfortunately, the “Preliminary Draft Proposed Malheur, Umatilla, and Wallowa-Whitman National Forest Land Management Plans” fall short on many of the critical aspects needed to promote and sustain healthy elk, deer, and other game populations, and they do virtually nothing to promote one of the most prominent recreational uses on the forests: hunting.

The draft plans don’t even include wildlife as a component of the plans. Hunting is barely mentioned.

One of the few references to providing anything for elk states “Utilize vegetation management and other activities to improve distribution of elk and encourage elk to remain on public lands.” OHA can support this statement for a variety of reasons, not the least of which is minimizing damage to surrounding private lands. However, this same statement was a key factor for OHA’s objection to a recent Forest Service project that stated the same intent, but then deliberately chose not to implement the actions that would encourage elk to remain on public lands.

OHA and numerous partners are joining forces to get our priorities heard to include critical components like elk security cover, fawning and calving area protection, and forage availability and production. Working through this process for any one forest is complex and difficult. Attempting to cover multiple national forests in one revision process adds to the complexity.



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OHA staff provided both written and oral comments on the 2025 sage grouse hunting permit numbers to the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission. Nearly every time the Commission discusses sage grouse in Oregon, they fall into a deliberation on hunting. And every time, OHA staff, along with ODFW biologists and OSU researchers, set the record straight. Hunting sage grouse in Oregon does not negatively impact sage grouse populations. Instead, it actually benefits the sage grouse conservation program by providing valuable information from wing samples submitted by successful hunters.

Hunting sage grouse involves applying for a hunt, waiting for draw results, and if successful in the drawing, purchasing a sage grouse permit and travelling to Oregon’s outback to enjoy your hunt. This all happens in a relatively short time span, making it challenging for many to pull hunting and travel plans together.

Unfortunately, this year the Commission added another step, holding up this process to discuss finalizing permit numbers at its August meeting. Normally, those decisions are made much earlier, then adopted as a temporary rule when the Commission meets at a later date. Not only did the Commission add another unnecessary step to the process, it also set in motion a pathway where both hunters and ODFW staff are under an even more compressed timeframe.

OHA pushed back on the need for this added step and delay. We strongly recommended that the Commission return to the previous process and drop this additional step. Time will tell if we were effective or not. In the meantime, ODFW staff have been scrambling to notify successful hunters, get wing sample envelopes distributed through the mail, and follow up with individuals where hunts were modified.

Oregon continues to take a very conservative approach to our sage grouse hunting opportunity. This approach is based on a strong framework for establishing and reviewing permit numbers, setting an initial hunt plan, and then after current survey and population modelling work is completed for the year, finalizing the hunt permit numbers for the year. This is a rigorous and time-consuming process, but it yields the best results for the birds, hunters and the agency.

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## Submit a CWD sample for a chance to win a Weatherby

OHA is offering a drawing for a Weatherby Vanguard 7mm Rem in First Lite Specter (value \$1,150) to hunters who submit chronic wasting disease samples between Aug. 1, 2025 and April 1, 2026. You get one automatic entry for every sample that you submit.

OHA is invested in keeping Oregon a CWD-free state for as long as possible, but early detection of the disease if and when found in Oregon is critical to limit the spread. CWD is a fatal disease capable of drastic negative impacts on deer, elk and moose populations.

It's easy to submit CWD samples at ODFW check stations, ODFW field and district offices (call first), and cooperating taxidermists and meat processors.

A list of current cooperating taxidermists and meat processors can be found at <https://tinyurl.com/65dcj2tz>

Hunters can help by not transporting certain parts of deer or elk. It is now illegal to bring certain parts home from another state. Check the big game regulations to see which parts to leave behind.

For more information, go to ODFW's website <https://myodfw.com/CWD>

## New '25 Gun Calendar winners announced

The latest winners in OHA's 2025 Gun Calendar Raffle have been announced, and the 2026 OHA Gun Raffle Calendar is on sale now! Call 541-772-7313 or visit <https://oregonhunters.org/shop/#raffles>

See weekly winners on OHA's website or download our app, which you can also use to enter OHA contests and get timely notifications.

★ **Weatherby Badlands .25-06**  
Jeff Price, Tualatin Valley Chapter

★ **Winchester XPR Compact 7mm-08 Rem**  
Mac McLaren

★ **Sig Sauer P320 M18**  
James Sibley, Clatsop County Chapter

★ **Howa 1500 Kryptek .223**  
Albert Rich, Hoodview Chapter

★ **Browning Abolt 3 Composite Stalker 7mm**  
Jacob Stewart, Ochoco Chapter



OHA Bend Chapter members Rex Parks (left) and John Bambi (right) accept OHA's Chapter of the Year Award from OHA Field Director Bryan Cook at the Chapter Leadership Summit on July 26. Bend Chapter volunteers logged more than 1,665 hours of habitat-related work last year.

## OHA honors members with '24 State Awards

OHA recognized outstanding volunteer efforts with the announcement of statewide annual awards at the OHA Chapter Summit on July 26. Chapters, state board members and staff nominate deserving individuals, and then vote from the nominees on the ballot. See the writeup for each award in the September-October OREGON HUNTER, also online at: <https://oregonhunters.org/publications>

### MEMBER OF THE YEAR - WILDLIFE:

Mitch Coultus, Pioneer Chapter

### MEMBER OF THE YEAR - ORGANIZATIONAL:

Brian Andrews, Pioneer Chapter

### LANDOWNER OF THE YEAR - CITIZEN:

David Sill

### LANDOWNER OF THE YEAR - CORPORATE:

Cascade Timber Consulting, Inc. (CTC),  
Agent for Hill Timber Limited Partnership

### YOUTH MEMBER OF THE YEAR:

Cooper Sorenson, Pioneer Chapter

### SPECIAL RECOGNITION AWARDS:

- Bill Beckley, Bend Chapter
  - JR Lorimor, Bend Chapter
  - Haley Fetzer, Mid-Columbia Chapter
  - Randy Haflich, Columbia County Chapter
  - Duane & Peggy Johnson, Pioneer Chapter
- CHAPTER OF THE YEAR:** Bend Chapter

## A GUN A WEEK! DON'T MISS OUT!



## GUN RAFFLE CALENDAR

**OHA will give away  
A GUN A WEEK in 2026!**

For \$50 you get:

- 2026 Gun Raffle Calendar.
- Chance to win 1 of 52 guns raffled (\$599-\$1,800).
- 1 Year OHA Membership (Join, renew, gift or \$35 toward life pledge)

**Buy yours today!**

**Call 541-772-7313**

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