



CHECKING OUR BACKTRAIL

2025 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE OREGON HUNTERS ASSOCIATION

OHA fights in Capitol, court and at Oregon's ballot box

OHA plays defense in 2025 legislative session

OHA took a defensive posture in the 2025 legislative session, combating both wildlife management and gun control bills.

While OHA opposed HB 3932, a bill that banned the trapping of beavers on impaired public waterways, it was ultimately passed with little scientific evidence presented in its favor.

OHA had greater success in the defeat, or reduced impact, of gun control bills. The session began with 17 bills specific to gun possession or ownership, and while not all of them sought to reduce Oregonians' access to firearms, most did.

At the midpoint of session, SB 243 emerged as a firearms omnibus bill, rolling four previously independent bills into one. This bill would have banned the possession of a firearm for anyone under the age of 21, required a mandatory 72-hour waiting period, restricted concealed carry in public buildings and adjoining properties, and banned rapid-fire trigger mechanisms. OHA was successful in getting the age restriction and wait period portions of the bill removed entirely, as well as greatly reducing the impact of the concealed carry restriction.

IP28 takes aim at the 2026 Ballot

IP28 proponents have gathered more than 80,000 signatures in the goal of making the 2026 ballot. IP28 would criminalize hunting, fishing, and trapping, as well as criminalize wildlife management efforts, education and research with animals, and even trapping vermin. It would also effectively end farming, ranching, and eating Oregon-grown animal products.

As outrageous as that may sound, they continue to receive large out-of-state and foreign contributions that allow them to employ paid signature gatherers. With seven months remaining before the deadline to turn in signatures, the initiative may be poised to reach the qualifying number of 117,173 signatures.

OHA continues to oppose this proposed measure, partnering with numerous sportsmen's organizations, as well as a coalition of farming and ranching organizations.

Measure 114 litigation continues

Measure 114 litigation efforts continue with the state lawsuit being heard by the Oregon Supreme Court in early November.

The suit was upheld by a Harney County judge in 2023, effectively instituting a permanent stay against the measure. That ruling was appealed by the State of Oregon, and the Oregon Court of Appeals ruled in March 2025 that the measure was Constitutional, ruling in opposition to the Harney County judge. The

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OHA's 2025 Investments in Our Mission

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| Projects benefiting Oregon's wildlife & sportsmen: | \$396,716 |
| Outreach, information & education: | \$306,602 |
| Defending hunting rights/Advocating for wildlife: | \$102,891 |
| Fighting poaching in Oregon: | \$81,084 |
| Volunteer hours donated by OHA members: | 33,058 |

legal team behind the lawsuit appealed that ruling to the Oregon Supreme Court, which took up the case in November 2025. That court's ruling is expected to be filed in 2026 and will determine the next steps in the fight against Measure 114.

To support this effort and others on the horizon, donate to OHA's Victory Fund at <https://oregonhunters.org/donate>

Women of OHA and Learn to Hunt programs headline OHA's outreach

Learn to Hunt program brings new hunters afield

The OHA Learn to Hunt Program continues to prove itself effective in reaching adults new to hunting through online and in-person courses and events. Over the course of the last four years, we have seen a steady increase in the number of course participants, program subscribers, and new OHA members – all indicators of a growing community.

The Learn to Hunt program will continue to evolve, focusing on providing relevant Oregon-specific instructional courses and materials in an effort to bring new hunters into the community.

Women of OHA program thrives in sophomore year

Since its launch in January 2024, the Women of OHA program has shown continuous growth. With current subscriber numbers nearing 300, the program is proving to be a valued addition to OHA's outreach efforts.

In addition to monthly newsletters with articles, profiles, and resources of specific interest to women, the program hosts several in-person events around the state, including the annual "Weekend Away" event, which combines conservation work with the fun of a chukar hunt.

The response to the program has been definitive, with the subscriber list growing nearly ten-fold in two years and the Weekend Away events selling out each year. In response, OHA will continue to prioritize this outreach program in conjunction with the Learn to Hunt Program and traditional outreach efforts.

OHA engaged important conservation issues in '25

OHA's Conservation Team had another busy year in 2025. There were numerous big accomplishments working on the ground for habitat restoration and enhancement and influencing important wildlife and land management decisions. OHA focused on conservation priorities across the state in various arenas.

Highlight Priorities for 2025



METOLIUS UNIT/JIM YUSKAVITCH

OHA's Mule Deer Fund made a major impact.

Mule Deer

In its first year, the OHA Mule Deer Fund provided critical match funds for five projects that are being implemented specifically to benefit mule deer. OHA allocated \$61,115 to these projects that are seeking to leverage \$1,372,000 in state, federal and partner funds combined.

OHA funded:

- ☛ Metolius land acquisition and bitterbrush planting on winter range
- ☛ Work to protect, restore and enhance aspen stands for the Sumpter herd range
- ☛ The Bend to Suttle Lake Wildlife Passage Initiative for the Deschutes mule deer herd
- ☛ Riparian enhancement within the Smoke Creek drainage for the Crescent herd range

Elk

The OHA Elk Management Subcommittee, operating under the OHA Wildlife-Lands Committee, addressed critical elk management issues across Oregon, including those on the west slope of the Cascades, Clatsop Plains, and in northeast Oregon. OHA funded a Bridge Creek Wildlife Area project that will treat 512 acres of annual

grasses through aerial herbicide applications. The goal of these treatments is to help improve winter range by restoring perennial grasses, which should ultimately help retain elk on these public lands and reduce elk damage issues in the Gurdane area. OHA also funded the Indian Prairie Aspen Restoration Project to restore aspen habitat by thinning 51 acres of encroaching conifers and installing fencing to protect 15 acres of aspen. This project will occur in the Ochoco Unit and will benefit elk and mule deer. Aspen stands provide lush cover for calving, wallowing areas, and a very palatable forage resource.

Gamebirds

Sage-grouse: OHA once again led support for continued sage-grouse hunting seasons in Oregon and denounced the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission's new process for approving permits. We are confident that our work will ensure successful applicants will have more time to plan for hunts in 2026.

Wild turkey: OHA played a lead role in supporting increased hunting opportunity for wild turkey in light of substantial population growth statewide. However, we are closely monitoring our wild turkey population trends to protect against overharvesting birds that predominantly use public lands.

Waterfowl: OHA supported increased bag limit for northern pintail from one to three daily.



OHA led efforts to fund the fight against CWD.

Chronic Wasting Disease

CWD continued to expand across the west in 2025. This dreadful, always-fatal disease has been confirmed in Idaho, Cali-

fornia and Washington, heightening our concerns for its detection in Oregon. OHA continued to work on programs to detect and prevent the spread of CWD to Oregon.

OHA provided incentives in 2025 – a drawing for rifle and optics prizes – for those who submitted samples of harvested deer and elk. OHA is committed to continuing these incentives into 2026.

In November 2025, all samples collected for deer and elk in Oregon will be processed in-state at the Oregon Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory (OVDL) at Oregon State University. Previously, all samples were collected and shipped to Colorado State University for testing, delaying results by 7-8 weeks. Testing at the OVDL will significantly shorten this timing to a week or less. The establishing of in-state testing was accomplished through \$2.7 million in state funding that OHA helped secure in the 2024 legislative session. OHA wrote the initial funding bill, advocated for the funding through two legislative sessions, and ultimately spearheaded the effort to secure the funding in 2024.

Renewable Energy and Impacts on Wildlife

With Oregon's aggressive clean energy goals looming in the near future, an immense amount of effort is being put into development of clean, renewable energy in our state. This led to policy discussions in the legislature, local governments, and state agencies. OHA was active in nearly all of these processes to safeguard against critical habitat losses and negative impacts to wildlife.

OHA staff wrapped up time served on a Rule Advisory Committee for the Department of Land Conservation and Development that was focused on eastern Oregon solar siting. OHA was successful in ensuring the most critical habitat areas are protected, and when development does occur in such areas, there is required mitigation per the ODFW Habitat Mitigation Plan. OHA tracked the development of first Oregon Energy Strategy and submitted comments to the Oregon Department of Energy pointing out the lack of clear communication around the impacts of energy development on wildlife and their habitat.

Land Management Plans and Projects

In 2025, the U.S. Forest Service, through interim direction from the Regional Forester, did an abrupt change to how they are choosing to manage access to our national forests. OHA and several partners shared our concerns over the impacts to both hunting and habitat. It appears the USFS had decided to ignore

OHA's Conservation Team of staff, committee members, and volunteers have continued their extensive work on critical conservation issues.

its own research on the needs for security cover for elk and mule deer. In a rare step, OHA submitted a formal objection on a high-profile project on the Umatilla National Forest, pointing to the need to better manage the Forest Service lands to keep elk on public

lands, rather than pressuring them onto surrounding private lands where long-term chronic damage has occurred. This input continued as the USFS continued to work through a major forest planning process for the three National Forests in northeast Oregon – the Umatilla, Malheur, and Wallowa-Whitman National Forests – to update their forest plans. OHA has provided comments pressing for the inclusion of habitat needs for game species and acknowledging the most prevalent form of recreational use: hunting.

OHA and many conservation partners were also successful in changing plans from the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee who were pushing to include a major sell-off of public lands as part of the overall budget bill that congress was working on. The initial bill included a mandate to arbitrarily sell at least 2 million acres, and up to 3 million acres of federal public lands across 11 western states.

OHA Active at Commission Meetings

OHA testified at every ODFW Commission meeting and flagged several wildlife management issues that we will continue to work on in the foreseeable future.



LAKE COUNTY/ODFW

OHA is seeking a pilot program that would provide active management of wolves in Oregon.

Wolves in Oregon

Wolf populations in Oregon continued to grow in 2025. Along with increased wolf populations come increased conflicts with livestock and increased questions on impacts on elk and deer populations. At the April Fish and Wildlife Commission meeting, ODFW staff shared information on the 2024 Annual Wolf Report. The report is an annual accounting of the status of wolves in Oregon and includes information on populations, dispersal, conflict with livestock, and management. Most of ODFW's report covered the three main factors that were prioritized at a wolf workshop in 2023. Those being illegal take of wolves, reducing depredation (specifically in NE Oregon), and improving population monitoring, including the development of a population model. Missing in the report is any reference to the predation effects on ungulates. These data are nearly impossible to find, and currently we know very little about the impact of wolf predation on Oregon's deer and elk herds.

There is still no population estimate for the total number of wolves in Oregon, which leaves only the "minimum wolf count" (204 wolves in 2024, a 15-percent increase), which is essentially useless for overall management of the species.

With this, OHA began work on planning for a potential pilot program in Wallowa County. The intent of the program would be to begin active wolf management in areas where chronic depredation has occurred and concerns for wolf impacts have occurred. This ambitious pilot program could produce a variety of benefits, and it will be a key focus area in 2026.

Habitat Connectivity/Wildlife Migration

OHA continued its tireless work to improve habitat connectivity and reduce wildlife vehicle collisions. Conservation staff have been involved in wildlife crossing projects across the state, including projects planned on Interstate 5 and state highways 20, 97, and 82. This work accomplishes multiple goals, such as reducing wildlife mortality, reducing damage to vehicles, and conserving migration corridors for big game. OHA was heavily involved in key pieces of legislation that were passed in the 2025 session.

Minam River Wildlife Area management

The Minam River Wildlife Area (MRWA) is one of the newest and biggest state wildlife areas in Oregon. ODFW, RMEF and OHA all supported the acquisition of the property (OHA contributed \$100,000) which has a multitude of benefits. The area hosts a wide array of game species, access to the Minam River, and a variety of publicly available outdoor recreation activities.

OHA had specific conversations with ODFW for the draft management plan for the Minam River Wildlife Area. The purpose of the plan is to share the goals and vision for the MRWA, document current condition of the area, identify management needs, discuss management actions (such as timber harvest and grazing) and set the groundwork for public use. OHA offered a number of suggestions on everything from management to funding, to hunting access. OHA looks forward to continuing our partnership on the MRWA and contributing on future projects.

