

Staff Summary

Background

The department has initiated a review and update of its 12 wildlife area long range management plans originally developed in 1993. The revision of the next two wildlife area (Jewell Meadows and Wenaha) management plans is complete and final draft plans have been developed.

Changes from previous review process

While the previous 1993 plan review process was aided by a wildlife area review committee, the current 2007 process relied heavily on local wildlife area and regional staff. Using the 1993 plans as a foundation, department staff developed draft management plans. Local stakeholder groups were informed of the planning process and were invited to help develop draft plans.

In the past several months, the department has met with the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to address relicensing of the Fern Ridge Wildlife Area. The current 25 year license agreement will end on September 31, 2007. Due to the scope and complexity of issues recently discussed, the department has decided to delay potential adoption of the Fern Ridge plan until the October 2007 Commission meeting, after the relicensing process has concluded.

Final Draft Goals and Objectives

Wildlife area goals are broad, open-ended statements of desired future conditions that convey a purpose but do not define measurable units. In contrast, objectives are more concise statements of what, how and where the department wants to achieve, and who will be responsible for the work. Objectives are derived from goals and provide the basis for determining strategies, evaluating the success of strategies, and monitoring wildlife area accomplishments.

Using input from both the formal public review process and internal review by staff, the department has finalized the goals and objectives of the two draft plans. These are listed below.

The goals and objectives for the Jewell Meadows Wildlife Area are:

Goal 1: To protect, enhance and restore habitats to benefit fish and wildlife species.

Objective 1.1: To protect, enhance, and restore 432 acres of agricultural areas to provide habitat for up to 200 elk on the Fishhawk Tract, 250 elk on the Beneke Tract, and 50 elk on the Humbug Tract.

Objective 1.2: To protect, enhance, and restore 489 acres of mixed coniferous and hardwood forest habitat.

Objective 1.3: To protect, enhance, and restore 46 acres of freshwater aquatic habitat and 118 acres of riparian habitats for the benefit of fish and wildlife.

Objective 1.4: To protect, enhance, and restore 11 acres of seasonal wetland habitat.

Objective 1.5: To maintain and enhance wildlife area facilities, structures, and equipment to conduct habitat management and public use projects on the wildlife area.

Goal 2: To minimize or alleviate conflicts caused by elk to adjacent lands which are compatible with Goal 1.

Objective 2.1: To provide supplemental feed to elk on the wildlife area during low natural forage production periods.

Objective 2.2: To control elk populations on the wildlife area at levels compatible with adjacent land use practices and current habitat conditions.

Goal 3: To provide a variety of wildlife oriented recreational and educational opportunities to the public which are compatible with Goals 1 and 2.

Objective 3.1: To provide approximately 550 hunting, trapping and angling use days annually.

Objective 3.2: To provide approximately 78,000 wildlife viewing and education/interpretation use days annually.

The goals and objectives for the Wenaha Wildlife Area are:

Goal 1: To protect, enhance and restore habitat diversity for all beneficial wildlife on the area.

Objective 1.1: Maintain, develop, and enhance winter habitat diversity to provide for up to 1,400 elk, 600 mule deer, 150 white-tailed deer and 150 bighorn sheep.

Objective 1.2: Maintain, develop, and enhance 12,419 acres of habitat for other beneficial fish and wildlife.

Objective 1.3: To maintain and enhance wildlife area facilities, structures, and equipment to facilitate habitat management and public use projects on the wildlife area.

Goal 2: Minimize or alleviate conflicts caused by elk and deer to privately owned lands and agricultural crops.

Objective 2.1: Develop and maintain 9,120 acres of habitat to attract and hold wintering elk and deer.

Objective 2.2: Provide a supplemental winter food source for up to 1,400 elk to reduce damage.

Goal 3: To provide a variety of wildlife oriented recreational and educational opportunities to the public which are compatible with Goals 1 and 2.

Objective 3.1: To provide approximately 10,000 hunting, trapping and angling use days annually.

Objective 3.2: To provide approximately 25,000 wildlife oriented recreation, education and interpretation use days annually.

Public Review Process

The department presented the draft management plans to the public at two formal public review meetings for Jewell Meadows Wildlife Area and three meetings for Wenaha Wildlife Area, in January and February 2007. These meetings were announced via local radio and news outlets, the department website and informational flyers given out at regional ODFW offices. Below is a summary of these meetings.

Jewell Meadows Wildlife Area

The Jewell Meadows Wildlife Area draft plan (Attachment 8) was presented and discussed at its two formal public meetings on January 24th in Forest Grove and on January 25th in Astoria. Four members of the public and one radio station reporter attended the first meeting and four people attended the second meeting.

Key issues and concerns raised at these meetings included: control of elk populations, translocation of elk, costs of feeding, any land acquisitions under consideration, timber management concerns, damage to private lands, number of animals the area staff is feeding. All of the verbal comments given at these meetings have been addressed in the strategies described in the final draft plan (see Attachment 4).

As of March 9, 2007, 33 hard copies of the draft plan have been handed out or hand delivered to interested parties and adjacent landowners. Informational flyers were sent to six key interest groups (OHA local and regional reps, RMEF and one adjacent landowner). Informational flyers were posted at department offices, on site and at a local store, and the draft plan, with comment information, was accessible from department's Web site.

One written correspondence was received.

Wenaha Wildlife Area

The Wenaha Wildlife Area draft plan (Attachment 8) was presented and discussed at three meetings: February 6th, 7th and 8th, in Troy, Enterprise and La Grande. Thirteen members of the public attended the Troy meeting, two people attended the Enterprise meeting and one person attended the La Grande meeting.

Key issues and concerns raised at these meetings included: use of Mill Bar cabin as a shooting range, fish stocking in the Grande Ronde river, continuing weed control, too many elk on private land, not enough elk and wolf sightings.

As of March 9, 2007, approximately 30 hard copies of the Wenaha Wildlife Area draft plan have been handed out to neighboring landowners, Wallowa County Commissioners, local legislators, a watershed council, USFS biologist and other interested parties. Six written correspondences have been received. Comments received have been addressed in the final draft plan.

Public correspondence received after March 9, 2007 will be presented to the Commission on April 13, 2007. An opportunity for public testimony will also be provided at this Commission meeting.