



ODFW Field Reports

Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission
April 20, 2018

EAST REGION

Bruce Eddy, Region Manager

Big Game Baiting

There has been increasing use of big game attractants on public lands by hunters. Hunters trying to entice animals to a trail camera or blind so the quality of game in an area can be evaluated and to draw animals to a preferred hunting location often use attractants (usually salt, mineral blocks, or marketed attractants).



Attractants can result in abnormal concentrations of animals in unique and sensitive habitats. Trampling, pawing, or intensive grazing by native ungulates at a specific site can damage riparian areas, meadows, springs, aspen stands, and watering holes. They can also affect livestock and feral horse distribution whose concentration can damage sensitive habitats as well.



Hunters are often unaware or unconcerned about the impacts of the attractants they place on other resources. Unlike livestock producers whose federally approved grazing allotment plans dictate how and where to use salt safely, hunters do not typically know to consult with resource managers on appropriate attractant use.

Conflict between hunters can also occur when one hunter stumbles upon and occupies a bait location placed by another or arguments erupt over the ethics of hunting big game over bait.

Federal land managers and department staff are increasingly concerned about this issue and are discussing ways to reduce the adverse effects of hunter associated baiting on federal lands. Topics include the creation of stricter criteria to allow law enforcement to write citations for placement of bait in sensitive areas and developing educational materials on the ethics and effects of big game baiting.

Catherine Creek Fish Habitat Restoration

The Catherine Creek-Hall Ranch Project (Project) is located on Catherine Creek (RM 50.1 to 52.2), tributary to the Grande Ronde River, near Union, Oregon. Hall Ranch is part of the Eastern Oregon Agricultural Research Center, which is owned and managed by Oregon State University (OSU).

This reach of Catherine Creek supports all freshwater life stages of federal ESA listed spring Chinook salmon, summer steelhead, and bull trout. Catherine Creek Chinook are considered non-viable at this time and thought to be at high risk for extinction. Chinook-spawning distribution is reduced substantially over that observed historically and escapement of natural origin spawners to the system has been problematic since 1980.

This Project is located in the highest priority area for Catherine Creek restoration. Up to 50% of Catherine Creek spring Chinook spawning occurs in the project reach each year. Abundance, productivity, and spatial distribution of Chinook here are limited by poor

habitat quality, quantity, and diversity. Specific problems include low abundance of pool habitat, lack of large wood, and loss of floodplain connectivity.

Catherine Creek was once a multi-channeled system and occupied nearly the entire valley floor here. The construction of Highway 203, reduced Catherine Creek to a single channel around 1936, and separated it from Milk Creek and its associated meadows and wetlands. Movement of the channel and associated erosion since 1975 has threatened Highway 203 causing safety concerns and increasing the need for maintenance.



The Department, OSU, Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT), Grande Ronde Model Watershed, Bonneville Power Administration (BPA), Union County Soil and Watershed Conservation District, and the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation are working together to relocate Highway 203 out of the Catherine Creek floodplain and to recreate the channel conditions found here historically. The goal is to increase the habitat quantity and quality, reduce the level for highway maintenance, and improve driver safety on this section of Highway 203.

The Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, BPA, and ODOT have provided initial design funding for the project.

WEST REGION

Bernadette Graham- Hudson, Region Manager

Willamette Wildlife Mitigation Program

The Willamette Wildlife Mitigation Program (WWMP) opened its project solicitation for fiscal year (FY) 2020 funding on February 28, 2018. The program will be accepting applications for habitat protection projects through May 4, 2018. To date, the WWMP has protected 8,083 acres of habitat in the Willamette Basin; as mitigation for wildlife impacts from federal Willamette Basin hydroelectric

and flood control facilities. The program obligation is to protect a minimum of 16,880 acres by 2025 (Fig. 1). Nine staff members administer the program and work with partners to acquire and manage lands with a focus on habitat restoration and preservation for fish and wildlife. Properties that have the potential to benefit Oregon Conservation Strategy Habitats and Species are prioritized.

Recent program activities include working with Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) to co-lead a workshop to introduce a revised land management plan template for use by program partners. We are hopeful the new template will reduce the time required for partners to write land management plans, freeing up time for more on-the-ground restoration and property management. In addition, we are planning a program review to evaluate progress to date and success in meeting the overall program objectives.

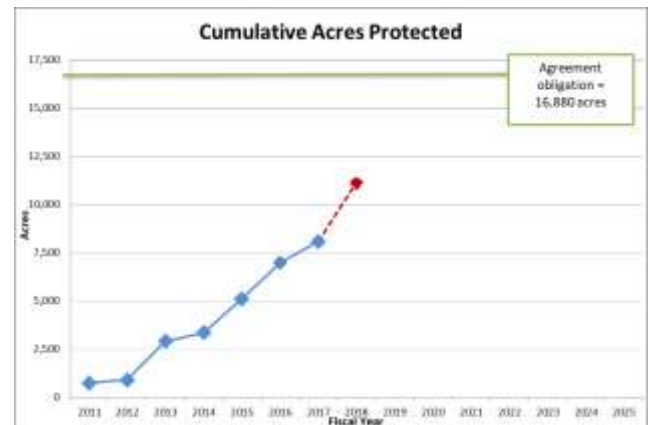


Figure 1. Cumulative acres protected under the Willamette Wildlife Mitigation Program since 2011. Red dashed line represents properties recommended for funding in FY18-19 that have not yet closed.

Steam boaters/ODFW Fish Count Comparison

A local fish conservation group, the Steam boaters, presented results of their examination of summer steelhead counts (100 percent counted) at Winchester Dam. These results were compared to ODFW's subsample data.

Preliminary results from the Steam boaters' "Fish Tick" software showed 3,903 summer steelhead crossed the dam while ODFW's subsample expansion count was 4,116. This is just about a five percent difference and showed our counts were within the expected margin of error.

After cuts to the Umpqua Fish District's budget in 2015, the district went from 100 percent counts to a

subsample and expansion design for enumeration of fish crossing Winchester Dam. Many Steam boaters' were concerned the subsample counts would be inaccurate so the group purchased Fish Tick software and conducted their own complete count of summer steelhead passing through the Winchester Dam fish ladder.

Results were presented at Steam boaters' annual banquet, which provided great opportunities for staff to interact with their members. The Steam boaters and ODFW plan to do the count comparison for summer steelhead again next year as further examination of the subsample count accuracy.

Central Cascade Wilderness Strategy

Springfield wildlife staff met with the Willamette National Forest recreation and wildlife staff to discuss their Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Central Cascades Wilderness Strategy 2017 as it pertains to hunting access. The EA, currently in the development phase, will address recreation management in the Mt. Jefferson, Mt. Washington, Three Sisters, Waldo Lake, and Diamond Peak wilderness areas.

An EA is needed to address a 200 to 500 percent increase in use at some wilderness access points (trailheads) in the last few years. This increased use led to garbage in the wilderness areas and access points, safety issues with cars parked on major roadways, and illegal camping. Although the draft EA has not been released, ODFW staff has been informed that all draft alternatives except the No Action alternative include some sort of limited entry strategy, which could affect hunters, anglers, ODFW staff, and volunteers.

There was limited hunter and angler engagement through the Public Scoping phase of this EA. ODFW staff has helped facilitate dialogue between the Forest Service and hunters. Staff participated in a meeting of the Oregon Hunter's Association Emerald Valley Chapter where the Forest Service received feedback from about 35 OHA members who expressed concern over how a limited entry system would affect hunting seasons such as the general archery and High Cascade buck season in September.

ODFW staff explained to the Forest Service that hunters use the wilderness areas very differently than hikers and other recreationists. Hunters tend avoid the areas of high public use and either do not use the

trail access points or use them to a certain point then go off trail. Staff suggested the Forest Service entertain the idea of allowing a hunting license to serve as the person's wilderness entry permit, modeled after a similar program in Arizona. A hunting license option could be excluded from entry quotas.

Staff is also considering how limited entry could affect high lakes fish stocking and angler access. Wildlife and fish staff is working to prepare and submit a coordinated response to the Forest Service during this EA scoping period. The Forest Service expects to release a Draft EA for public comment in April 2018.

INFORMATION AND EDUCATION

Roger Fuhrman, Information and Education Administrator

Archery in the Schools State Tournament

The Linn County Expo Center was converted to an indoor archery range in mid-March. More than 100 elementary, middle school and high school archers took part in the Oregon State National Archery in the Schools Program. NASP introduces students to international target style archery as part of the physical education curriculum.

This year, ODFW managed the state tournament for the first time. Previously, volunteers managed NASP. For the 2018 event, 30 shooting lanes were set up in the Expo Center to accommodate archers from eight schools. Last year, about 70 archers competed in the state tournament.



Between events, participants visited exhibitor booths from Bowtech, Benton Bowman, Traditional Archers of Oregon, and others.

Update - Trout Stocking Schedule

In March, ODFW launched a redesigned trout-stocking schedule to help anglers find locations to fish. The new system is considerably different from the old approach, which consisted of a PDF document organized by stocking date. A video was produced to help users navigate the new process. Social Media Coordinator Tim Akimoff walks users through how to search by waterbody, zone and when the location was/is stocked. STEP biologist Antonio Salgado took the concept even further by narrating the video in Spanish. Antonio regularly helps with our social media efforts by responding to questions submitted in Spanish on ODFW Facebook sites. Many of those questions are about fishing opportunities or the fish-stocking schedule. Antonio saw an opportunity help answer those questions by making a Spanish language version of the video available on YouTube.

OREGON STATE POLICE

Captain Jeff Samuels, Fish & Wildlife Division

SW Region

On March 12, 2018, a Senior Trooper from the Roseburg office observed an angler catch and retain a steelhead on the South Umpqua River. The angler and two other subjects appeared to be nervous and were making sure no other anglers were watching them. The angler took the fish to his vehicle, where he was contacted. The angler at first denied keeping the fish. After being confronted, he admitted the steelhead was in the trunk of his vehicle. A wild (non-adipose fin clipped) steelhead was found within the subject's trunk. The angler was criminally cited for Unlawful Take of Non-Adipose Fin-Clipped Steelhead. A second subject was criminally cited for Aiding/Counseling in a Wildlife Offense. A third subject was issued a violation citation for No 2018 Resident Angling License. The steelhead and the anglers fishing pole was seized as evidence.



NW Region

A Senior Trooper from the Salem Office investigated a report of a doe deer that was shot in rural Benton County. The subsequent investigation revealed that two juvenile subjects stopped their vehicle on a public roadway and one of the male subjects walked onto a piece of private property and shot a doe deer. The two male subjects came back to the scene, were interviewed by the Senior Trooper, and admitted to shooting the doe deer. The deer, a 300 Win mag bolt-action rifle, and a shell casing were seized as evidence. One of the male subjects was cited for Take Antlerless Deer and the other male subject was cited for Aiding/Counseling in a Wildlife Offense. The deer was salvaged and donated to the Union Gospel Mission in Salem.

East Region

A Senior Trooper from the Madras Office was out on Lake Billy Chinook checking tags, when he came across these two happy anglers with some nice Bull Trout.



A Senior Trooper from the Dalles Office was dispatched to a call of a suspect wanting to turn himself in. The suspect knowingly had trespassed onto the White River Wildlife area. The suspect and girlfriend, after taking some sheds at one of the deer feeders, had noticed a camera in the tree. The

suspect decided to make some inappropriate gestures at the camera. After he was done having his fun, it dawned on him that the camera probably belonged to the State Police, and not wanting his photo to be placed on Facebook, he immediately called to turn himself in. The Senior Trooper cited the suspect and his girlfriend for unlawful entry into ODFW lands.

CONSERVATION PROGRAM

Andrea Hanson, Oregon Conservation Strategy Coordinator

Conservation Biologist Job Rotation

Amy Darr, assistant district wildlife biologist (North Willamette Watershed District) is now in a job rotation as the southwest Conservation Strategy Implementation Biologist in Roseburg. She started in late March and will work in the rotation until July 31, 2019. The previous conservation biologist Steve Niemela is in a job rotation as the Central Point district wildlife biologist.

Amy will direct, coordinate, and implement the Oregon Conservation Strategy (OCS) in the Rogue and Umpqua Watershed Districts including habitat restoration. Specific ongoing projects include: setting up and evaluating amphibian and reptile use of habitat by using cover boards on the Denman Wildlife Area; Western pond turtle surveys, including work with the Southern Oregon/Northern California pond turtle group; monitoring song birds on the Coquille Valley Wildlife Area in coordination with the wildlife district and Audubon society; and working with OSU Extension as they set up a Master Naturalist program in the Medford area.

Watercraft Inspection Stations Opened

After finding contaminated boats coming into the Ashland watercraft inspection station during spot checks in winter 2016-17, both Ashland and Ontario stations were open experimentally this winter, 2017-18. Normally, the stations close in October and reopen in late February or early March.

During this first experimental open winter season, technicians in Ontario intercepted boats from Lake Michigan and the Florida gulf that were contaminated with zebra and brown mussels. A boat owner coming into Oregon at Ashland from Lake Mead after inspection hours called ODFW, and technicians drove to his home in Reedsport to inspect his pontoon boat. Although the boat had been decontaminated at Lake Mead, technicians still found 248 quagga mussels.



Ontario 2018 brown mussels contaminated boat from Florida

Oregon is the only state known to experiment with year-round open inspection stations and the results warranted the decision to keep Ashland and Ontario open and fully staffed all year. From January through mid-March 2018, technicians conducted 464 inspections in Ashland and 585 in Ontario. In addition to the mussels found on boats, technicians have also helped stop the spread of aquatic invasive plants including Eurasian milfoil and parrot feather.



Reedsport 2018 Decon of contaminated pontoon boat from Lake Mead

Watercraft inspection stations in Gold Beach, Klamath Falls, Umatilla, Lakeview, and Burns

opened April 16. Last year, staff experimented with opening a station in Burns; the first boat they inspected was infested with quagga mussels from Lake Mead. Burns is not expected to be a busy station, but it is an important one to intercept boats coming from Lake Mead.

Wildlife Priority Strategy Species List

Conservation Program staff developed a Wildlife Priority Strategy Species List for each ecoregion, excluding the Nearshore ecoregion. The list is meant to help focus ODFW's wildlife conservation efforts, making them strategic to improve probability of success. With 294 Strategy Species, it can be challenging to determine which species to focus our limited time and resources on.

The list can be used to guide available program funds, external grant applications, and staff involvement in on-the-ground efforts or partnerships. The priority species list is not intended to restrict staff workloads or projects, but to provide some assistance in determining future conservation efforts.

OCEAN SALMON AND COLUMBIA RIVER PROGRAM

Tucker Jones, Ocean Salmon and Columbia River Program Manager

BPA Financial Issues Likely to Result in Program Funding Reductions

The Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) and the Northwest Power and Conservation Council's (NPCC) Columbia Basin Fish and Wildlife Program are a significant funding resource for regional fish and wildlife mitigation actions. The FY 2017 NPCC Fish and Wildlife Program budget was approximately \$270 million dollars. Of that, ODFW received approximately \$13.5 million dollars in BPA funded federal contracts to implement fish, wildlife and habitat programs across the agency. These contracts have remained largely flat funded, over the past few biennia; that is unlikely to be the case in the future. The BPA has been the Pacific Northwest's dominant force in power generation and transmission for decades but the BPA is facing a new and changing power market in the 21st century. Natural gas prices have plummeted with the advent of "fracking" and are likely to remain low in the foreseeable future. A virtual flood of renewable solar and wind generation, particularly in California, that has inundated the Northwest power market, and future development to comply with west coast renewable policy mandates

will continue to drive construction of future solar and wind generation in Oregon.

At the same time, energy conservation efforts have essentially erased any real increase in power demand in the recent past and future demand is predicted to increase at less than 1% per year in future decades. All of these trends are converging to drive the cost of both wholesale and secondary market power prices down in the Northwest.

Elliott Mainzer, BPA's administrator, in an appearance before the NPCC earlier this month said,

"The current realities of the West Coast electricity system – cheap natural gas, an abundance of renewable power, low prices – will challenge the Bonneville Power Administration in the future, perhaps as never before."

BPA has developed a 2018-2023 strategic plan in an attempt to proactively respond to the new power market trends. One of the four tenants of BPA's new strategic plan is to lower costs, including Fish and Wildlife Program costs. The goal is to reduce and keep the cost below any inflationary increases between now and when BPA's wholesale contracts are due for renewal in 2028.

Prompted by the new realities of BPA funding, ODFW managers have begun a comprehensive agency wide review of BPA funded programs and projects. The purpose is to review these programs for consistency in budgeting approaches and in application of BPA's task-oriented accounting and reporting requirements. This effort will position ODFW to react effectively to austerity measures within BPA funded programs. However, because most of these contracts have been flat funded for many years, most projects have already achieved significant budget efficiency measures, and programmatic cuts are likely to be necessary to achieve BPA's cost reduction goals.

END OF FIELD REPORTS FOR April 20, 2018

