



ODFW Field Reports

Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission
December 7, 2018

EAST REGION

Bruce Eddy, Region Manager

2018 Riley Freeman Award

Riley Freeman was a Baker County rancher and a strong advocate for cattlemen interests. While he could be critical of department rules and policies, he recognized the need for ranching and wildlife interests to work together. While Chair of Oregon Cattlemen Association's (OCA) Wildlife Committee; Riley was instrumental in passage of legislation creating the Access and Habitat (A&H) Program.

OCA and the department created the Riley Freeman Award in 1994 to recognize Riley's contributions to both ranching and wildlife. The award recognizes the spirit of collaboration of an OCA member with fish and wildlife interests exemplified by Riley during his life.

This year's award recipient is Bob Skinner. Bob has spent many years improving the working relationship between the livestock industry and department staff in southeastern Oregon. He is a frequent and active participant in public meetings, working groups, and committees dealing with natural resource issues. He is an effective communicator and is often the bridge between differing viewpoints.

For many years, the department and other agency staff have relied on Bob for an open, reasoned discussion of ranching and wildlife management. At Bob's insistence, this discussion has often involved a field trip because there is nothing like a few hours (or days) in the field to facilitate discussion.

Bob has been active in sage grouse conservation for many years, serving on the local implementation team and helping secure funding to enhance sage grouse survey efforts. Recognizing that fire and invasive annual grasses are one of the largest threats to ranching and wildlife sustainability Bob has been active with the Jordan

Valley Rural Fire Protection Association (RFPA) and has helped build its capabilities.

Bob's family has a long ranching history in the Jordan Valley and recognizes maintaining that tradition requires managing both the ranch and adjacent public lands for sustainability. The Skinner Ranch borders Jordan Creek and provides important habitat for a variety of wildlife species including core sage grouse habitat and two Oregon Conservation Strategy Conservation Opportunity Areas.

A recently completed 390-acre irrigation improvement project on the family ranch along Jordan Creek will reduce sediment and nutrient delivery to the creek. It will also reduce mosquito habitat and a corresponding risk of West Nile Virus to sage grouse.

Lostine River Coho

Coho salmon were native to the Grande Ronde River and its tributaries. Native Grande Ronde coho were nearly extirpated by 1908 mainly due to unsuccessful hatchery programs. Hatchery releases between the 1920s and 1960s maintained a small but declining natural population. The natural population was completely extirpated by 1979.

The department and Nez Perce Tribe (NPT) developed a framework for reintroducing coho to the Grande Ronde in 2016. The goals of the framework were to restore natural production, tribal and non-tribal harvest and marine derived nutrients. Our efforts began with a pilot program to determine if restoration would be feasible. Hatchery produced coho smolts will be released between 2017 and 2021 as part of the pilot effort. If the pilot phase is successful, a locally adapted stock will be developed with adults returning to the Lostine River weir.

The first pilot phase releases were made to the Lostine River in March 2017. The first adult coho returning from this release arrived at the Lostine River weir on October 22, 2018, one year and eight months after release. To date 116 coho have

returned to the Lostine weir. The first Lostine coho redds observed in nearly 40 years were documented in early November.



Lostine coho are expected to return through early December. Based on passive integrated transponder (PIT) tag detections it appears over 800 Lostine River coho have passed Lower Granite Dam this year. During the pilot phase, all fish returning to the Lostine weir will be released upstream to spawn naturally.

Nez Perce Tribe and department biologists will work together to document spawn timing and distribution throughout the fall. The first natural-origin coho are expected to hatch during spring 2019, and return in 2021.

Initial indicators suggest program objectives may be achievable even despite the poor overall performance of Columbia Basin anadromous stocks returning in 2018.

WEST REGION

Bernadette Graham-Hudson, Region Manager

Denman Youth Pheasant Hunt

The annual Youth Pheasant Hunt was held at Denman Wildlife Area on the weekend of September 15-16. The event was an outstanding success, as 166 youth participants and as many accompanying adults pursued pheasants during this hunt, which is nine more hunters than last year. Over the weekend, 500 pheasants were released on the wildlife area and the kids logged in a total of 475 hours of hunting. Young hunters averaged one bird each with a total of 169 birds taken.

This event brings the hunting community together. Many local dog handlers volunteered to help the

youth in finding their birds; 62 percent of the youth reported hunting over a dog. Breakfast and a hotdog lunch were provided by United Hunters and Sportsmen Inc. Former ODFW district biologist Rick Warner and former habitat biologist Vince Oredson ran the trap range for the shooting clinic. The Oregon Hunters Association and the Rogue Valley Retriever Club purchased over half of the pheasants used for the hunt. Food and prizes were provided by Umpqua Dairy, Layton Refrigeration, and White City Taco Bell. The feedback we received regarding the event was overwhelmingly positive as usual.



Mussel Distribution Study

Springfield Fish District participated in a mussel distribution study in the Middle Fork Willamette River in preparation of a large restoration project that will occur at Elijah Bristow State Park. The distribution and species information will help inform whether the district should salvage mussels prior to restoring the area. Many large mats of western pearl-shells and a few Oregon/western floaters were found. Of interest, the crew also discovered a couple of piles totaling about 750 western pearl-shells not far from the river.



The survey went from Dexter Dam to Pengra Boat Landing. The survey team included Middle Fork Willamette Watershed Council, Willamette Riverkeepers, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Oregon Parks Department and a few volunteers.

Aquarium Kits Help Kids with Autism

Springfield fish staff set up two aquarium kits at the Bridgeway House in Eugene with recruited help from Tana Shepard from the 4J (Eugene) School District. The Bridgeway House serves the needs of children with autism and related abilities while educating and supporting their families.

Winchester Dam Repairs

Umpqua Fish District staff is evaluating impacts to fish resources that occurred in late October while repairs were being made to Winchester Dam. District staff and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) provided recommendations for those repairs which included not pouring concrete within the wetted channel; however, green concrete was poured behind a coffer dam, and some discharged occurred within the wetted channel. Staff salvaged juvenile steelhead and Chinook, ammocetes, macrophthmia, three-spine sticklebacks and sculpin.



Staff monitored this situation closely and provided updates to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), NOAA, Oregon Department of State lands, Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (ODEQ) and Oregon Water Resources Department. They also worked with these agencies to minimize habitat impacts as the contractor continued emergency repairs. Impacts to natural resources appear to be minimal; however, the USACE and ODEQ are following up with the contractor to evaluate impacts and any possible corrective measures. Fish mortality included one ammocete, seven juvenile steelhead, five juvenile Chinook and three mussels.



INFORMATION AND EDUCATION

Roger Fuhrman, Information and Education Administrator

Fall Workshops and Events

The weather is getting colder, but that is no reason to stay inside. ODFW is offering a number of fishing and hunting workshops to help Oregonians prepare for fall and winter activities.

About 40 people participated in an early November Steelhead 101 workshop. The event was co-hosted by the Sandy Chapter, Association of NW Steelheaders, and is designed so that beginning anglers learn the essential elements of steelhead fishing. The workshop included one day of classroom instruction on selecting the right gear, knots, ethics, and tips and techniques. The following weekend, participants hit the water with volunteers from Steelheaders.

Waterfowl hunting workshops get underway in mid-November, starting with basic shotgun skills instruction. The workshop provides participants the opportunity to gain the knowledge and skills to be successful hunters. In December, participants will head to the field to learn how to set decoys, use calls, identify ducks, field dress their harvest, and safely handle and fire shotguns in actual hunting situations.

Anyone wanting to work off Thanksgiving dinner or avoid the shopping mall on Black Friday can go fishing instead. Friday, November 23rd and Saturday, November 24th are free fishing days. ODFW offers Oregon residents and visitors the opportunity to explore and experience fishing, crabbing, and clamming without the need for a license or tags on designated free fishing days. Regulations and bag limits still apply.

MyODFW.com – First Year Statistics

MyODFW.com, the department's recreation focused website, went live in late September 2017. The site was developed to respond to public interest in fishing, hunting, crabbing, clamming, and wildlife viewing. Here are some statistics from the first year of service for MyODFW.com:

- 6,937,003 unique page views
- 12,649,729 unique page views for MyODFW.com and the agency website (ODFW.com)
- Visitation to ODFW websites is up 23% over same time period in 2016-2017
- 22 of the top 50 pages visited on MyODFW.com were related to the Weekly Recreation Report

The addition of wildlife viewing content to MyODFW.com has also been popular. During the first year, three of the top 50 pages visited on MyODFW.com were wildlife viewing related. Previously, wildlife viewing content never showed up in the list of top pages visited on the ODFW website.

OREGON STATE POLICE

Captain Jeff Samuels, Fish & Wildlife Division

Fish and Wildlife Troopers (F&W) in LaPine received information from a resident in Crescent that a neighbor had come over and asked to remove a bull elk from his field. The neighbor explained that somebody had entered his driveway and shot the bull in the middle of the night, and now they just wanted to salvage the meat. The subjects told the troopers the same story. After the investigation, the subjects admitted that they had shot the four point bull elk from the house at night and lost it. They located the elk on the neighbor's property the following day. The bull elk was found hanging in their garage. Through additional investigation and questioning, the subjects admitted that they had also killed two cow elk and one doe deer earlier in the year. Additional evidence was found on the property. The shooter was cited for *Unlawful Take Bull Elk Closed Season*, two counts of *Unlawful Take Cow Elk Closed Season*, and one count of *Unlawful Take Doe Deer Closed Season*. Another subject was cited for two counts of *Aiding in a Game Violation*. The rifle, deer meat, and elk parts were seized as evidence.

A F&W Sergeant from the Bend office contacted three subjects in their truck on a skid road in the Ochoco Unit. When asked, one subject showed his

valid tag. The subject indicated they had another member of their party in the field with a gun and they were going to pick him up. When asked, the subjects said the other individual had a valid tag as far as they knew. The F&W Sergeant left the area as the subject drove up the skid road. The Sergeant returned and walked up the skid road and subsequently located a larger group of subjects now loading a 6x7 bull into the pickup. The subject whom was just checked now had his tag on the bull elk. The investigation revealed a subject without a valid tag harvested the elk and the other subject responded to tag it. The tag holder was cited for *Loaning a Big Game Tag*. The shooter was cited for *Unlawful Take Bull Elk and Borrowing a Big Game Tag*. Three other subjects were cited for *Aiding in a Game Crime*.

F&W Troopers from the St Helens Office conducted a spike elk wildlife enforcement decoy operation in the Saddle Mt Unit (which has a three (3) point or better antler restriction as well as being a controlled hunt). A vehicle stopped, and the driver immediately got out and fired multiple rounds at the decoy without looking at it for more than a few seconds. The subject was contacted and found to have a general Coast Elk Tag, and not a Saddle Mountain tag. The subject was cited for *Taking Spike Elk Closed Season* and for *No Big Game Tag*.

CONSERVATION PROGRAM

Meghan Dugan, West Region and Conservation Communications

ODFW Art Show & Conservation Cuvee Wine Release Event a Success

More than 300 people attended this year's art show at Duck Pond Cellars, up significantly from past years. The winery sold 201 bottles of Conservation Cuvee Lots one (1) through six (6), doubling the amount sold last year during the show. With Duck Pond's donation of \$5 for every Conservation Cuvee bottle sold, the Conservation Program will receive \$1,005 just from this wine sold at the event.



Oregon artist Karin Wares took first in both the Habitat Conservation Stamp Art and the People's Choice award with her painting of Franklin's bumble bee. Kip Richmond of North Carolina took first in the Upland Game Bird Stamp contest with his painting of a ruffed grouse, and the Waterfowl Stamp Art winner was Guy Crittenden of Virginia with his painting of a pair of greater white-fronted geese.



Salamander survey

Conservation biologist Susan Barnes conducted a Visual Encounter Survey (VES) for terrestrial salamanders at Metro's Gabbert Butte Nature Park with Metro, City of Gresham, and several local herpetologists. The area surveyed is proposed for future trail development as part of Metro's master planning process for the park.

Although no Oregon slender salamanders (an Oregon Conservation Strategy Species) were located, three more common salamander species were found: *Ensatina*, Western red-backed salamander and Dunn's salamander. Another VES and other wildlife surveys are planned this spring to inform the planning process. Photo below is an *Ensatina* by Natalie McNear on Flickr.



Dairy Creek Flows Free

A milestone was reached in early November when the Reeder Road bypass and coffer dams in Dairy Creek were removed. The Dairy Creek channel is now reopened to tidal flow between the Columbia River and Sturgeon Lake on Sauvie Island.

The Sturgeon Lake Restoration Project at the Sauvie Island Wildlife Area was decades in planning, partnership building, fund raising, engineering and permitting capped by five months of construction. The West Multnomah Soil & Water Conservation District has been working on Sturgeon Lake restoration since the District was formed in 1944.



The District collaborated with ODFW and ODEQ in 1985 to explore ways to reestablish the Dairy Creek connection. A channel redirection was

completed in 1989, but the historic floods of 1996-97 sent sand and woody debris to the mouth of Dairy Creek again plugging the channel. Shortly thereafter, many Columbia River salmonid species were listed for federal Endangered Species Act protection.

This winter, crews will plant the creek banks with native trees and shrubs to replace thickets of non-native blackberry and false indigo bush that were removed at the beginning of construction. Sturgeon Lake will be monitored for invasive plant species that might travel up Dairy Creek from the Columbia River.

MARINE RESOURCES PROGRAM

Caren Braby, Marine Resources Program Manager

Dungeness crab Fishery Management Plan (FMP)

Commercial Dungeness crab is the highest landed value marine fishery in Oregon, and commercial and recreational harvesters alike covet the species. In recent years, the commercial value of crab fisheries has steadily increased, yet the challenges facing crab harvesters have also increased. The Commission has demonstrated leadership in addressing one of these challenges; the climate related increasing frequency of harmful algal blooms, which produce bio toxins harmful to human health. When crab forage on clams or decaying matter on the sea floor, these bio toxins accumulate in their intestines and pose a risk to humans that consume them. Through establishment of Commission rules in April of 2018, Oregon now has a tracking system in place for commercially harvested crab, to reduce the risk of human consumption of contaminated crab and maintain the economic benefits of each year's crab harvest.

To better document these changes as well as the basis on which the Dungeness crab fisheries are managed, the department is initiating the development of the Dungeness Crab Fishery Management Plan (FMP). The FMP will largely be a description of crab biology and ecology, a description of the fisheries management in Oregon and along the West Coast (including both recreational and commercial sectors), and a description of the challenges facing harvest and conservation of this species.

While FMP development will take some time to complete (target completion in 2020-2021), the

intention is to prepare Oregon and the fisheries that rely on Oregon's State Crustacean, the Dungeness crab for another 100 years of delicious productivity.

Oregon Coordinating Council on Ocean Acidification and Hypoxia (OAH Council) – Report now available

Oregon's OAH Council has submitted its first Legislative report, which focuses on recommended action areas to prepare Oregon for changing ocean conditions, climate change, and increasing ocean acidification and hypoxia. This report is the first Oregon-focused set of recommendations, and it will serve as a foundation for a more streamlined OAH Action Plan, scheduled for completion in summer of 2019. Because Oregon is already experiencing significant impacts from OAH (including food web impacts, oyster culture impacts, Dungeness crab impacts), it is time to prepare for future changes. For more on the OAH Council recommendations, impacts from OAH to Oregon species, and how you can get involved in Oregon's OAH Action Plan, please visit the Council website:

<https://www.oregonocean.info/index.php/ocean-acidification>

END OF FIELD REPORTS FOR December 7, 2018