

Spring 2011

Oregon's Access & Habitat Board News



The Oregon Legislature established the Access and Habitat Program in 1993, funded primarily through a \$4 surcharge on hunting licenses and proceeds derived from deer and elk auction and raffle tags. The A&H Board, composed of members of the public, identifies and recommends funding for projects that improve wildlife habitat and facilitate public hunting access on private lands.

A&H projects focus on improving habitat for Oregon's greater sage grouse populations

Greater sage grouse is one of Oregon's signature wildlife species that ranges throughout the West's sagebrush region. But they are dependent on sagebrush habitat, which has been reduced in the U.S. by about half due to human development, livestock grazing, wildfire, and the spread of non-native plants.

The historical sage grouse population in the U.S. has been estimated in the millions. Surveys conducted in 2007 found fewer than 90,000 males on about 5,000 leks in the western U.S. In 2010, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service denied a petition to list greater sage ground under the Endangered Species Act, but found the species eligible for listing although precluded by higher priority species.

In Oregon, greater sage grouse are found in the southeast and central parts of the state, and northeast into Baker County.

While Oregon's population is strong enough to have a controlled hunting season, it has experienced some instability and declines over the past 40 years. The current statewide population estimate is 30,000 to 45,000 birds.

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife is taking proactive measures to conserve greater sage grouse and, in December 2010, the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission adopted the revised *Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Assessment and Strategy for Oregon*, which is designed to help guide the conservation of this species throughout its Oregon range. Habitat protection and restoration is a major focus of the plan, and the Access and Habitat Program is



Access and Habitat Program projects restore and enhance habitat for greater sage grouse. Photo by Nick Myatt/ODFW

well positioned to help with that effort.

A good example is the Thomas Sage Steppe Habitat Management project in Baker County, which received an \$11,575 A&H grant in March 2011. This project is located on 1,200 acres of private land, which studies have shown is used by sage grouse during the winter, when the birds rely entirely on sagebrush habitat to survive. In addition, there is at least one known lek within a mile of the property.

The project involves developing new water sources to better distribute use of the range by cattle, treating invasive plants, and planting a seed mix to benefit sage grouse and other birds. This will serve to protect and enhance the already good-quality sagebrush habitat present on the property.

One of the bigger A&H projects to ben-

efit sage grouse is the Sundry/Rooster Rock Project, also in Baker County, where \$63,520 was used to fund juniper cutting on 863 acres of private lands in 2009. Last year, a \$50,000 A&H grant funded treatment of another 720 acres.

"We are doing juniper removal on a landscape level with federal, state, and local partnerships," said ODFW district wildlife biologist Nick Myatt in Baker City. "When we are finished it will encompass about 100,000 acres in the upper Burnt River watershed."

Removing junipers reduces competition with sagebrush and other plants for water and nutrients. Junipers also provide perches for hawks to search for sage grouse to prey on. This property is part of a much larger project to improve sagebrush habitat for sage grouse and other wildlife species.

The \$31,803 McGinnis Range and Habitat Improvement project, within the Grande Ronde watershed, is another recent A&H project where noxious weeds have been treated along with reseeding desirable plants to improve habitat for greater sage grouse.

Future A&H projects will continue to improve habitat for this iconic grouse of Oregon's sagebrush country.

Oregon Open Fields

The new Oregon Open Fields program offers Willamette Valley and Columbia basin landowners income in exchange for public hunting access. See page 3 of this newsletter or visit: www.oregonopenfields.com



2011 A&H big game raffles and auctions gross nearly \$322,000

The 2011 auctions and raffles for A&H elk and deer hunting tags grossed \$321,920. Of that, \$209,000 will go to the A&H Program to fund wildlife habitat and hunter access projects. The auctions garnered \$232,750 while the raffle brought in \$89,170.

The sportsman/conservation groups that sponsored the auctions at their banquets and conventions will keep 10 percent of the auction proceeds (\$23,750).

Winners of the special tags enjoy an extended season and expanded hunt area. A list of the auction proceeds and raffle winners follows.

2011 Auction Sales

Tag	Winning Bid	Organization	Auction Date
Statewide Deer	\$26,000	Mule Deer Foundation	Feb. 4
Statewide Deer	\$25,000	Safari Club International	Feb. 5
Statewide Elk	\$24,000	Unlimited Pheasants	Feb. 19
Governor's Statewide Deer/Elk Combination	\$40,000	Rocky Mountain Elk Fdn	March 4
Statewide Elk	\$26,000	Wild Sheep Foundation	March 5
Statewide Deer	\$26,500	Safari Club International	March 19
Statewide Elk	\$24,000	Rocky Mountain Elk Fdn	April 9
Statewide Elk	\$16,250	Oregon Hunters Assoc.	April 9
Statewide Deer	\$25,000	Oregon Hunters Assoc.	May 21

2011 Raffle Winners

Tag	Raffle Winner	Winner's Hometown
Statewide Combination Deer and Elk	Alfredo Julian	Vancouver, WA
Statewide Deer	Andrew Niemi	St. Helens, OR
Southeast Oregon Deer	Raymond Wurdinger	Dayton, OR
Central Oregon Deer	Michael Sheets	Redmond, OR
Northeast Oregon Deer	Russell Bingaman	Imbler, OR
Statewide Elk	Brian McDowell	Mill City, OR
Northeast Oregon Elk	Chad Thompson	Elgin, OR
Central/Southeast Oregon Elk	Edie Banducci	Umpqua, OR
Western Oregon Elk	Raymond Wurdinger	Dayton, OR

Oregon's Access and Habitat Board News is now Available Online!

To subscribe to our electronic mailing list, please visit:

www.dfw.state.or.us/AH

To receive a paper subscription, please fill out this form and mail it to: Access and Habitat Program, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, 3406 Cherry Avenue, N.E., Salem, OR 97303

Name _____

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To be removed from this mailing list check the box to the left and return coupon

Calendar of Events

September 6

A&H Grant Applications Due
503-947-6087

October 17-18

A&H Board Meeting,
Lakeview, 503-947-6087

December 2

Fish and Wildlife Commission
Meeting, Portland Airport Area
503-947-6044

Have an idea for an A&H project?

If you have an idea for a project that increases public hunting access to private lands and/or improves wildlife habitat, contact the A&H Regional Coordinator nearest you for advice and assistance on applying for an A&H grant.

Northwest Region

Dave Nuzum, Tillamook 503-842-2741
David Stoppel, Corvallis 541-757-5237

Southwest Region

Vince Oredson, 541-826-8774
Central Point

High Desert Region

Larry Pecenka, Bend 541-633-1117
Meg Eden, Prineville 541-447-5111
Tom Segal, Hines 541-573-6582

Northeast Region

Jon Paustian, La Grande 541-962-1838

A&H on the Web

www.dfw.state.or.us/AH



Fish & Wildlife Commission approves 8 A&H projects at June 3 meeting in Salem

Lucky Creek Mule Deer Habitat Enhancement

A \$25,760 grant will help fund mule deer habitat improvement through cutting and burning junipers, developing new water sources, and fencing riparian habitat. This project is located in Crook County, southeast of Prineville.

Pringle Creek Habitat Enhancement

Part of an extensive mule deer and elk habitat improvement effort in Crook County, this project received \$32,566 to help remove juniper on 3,000 acres, thin juniper and ponderosa pine, develop springs, plant 1,200 acres of rangeland with wildlife forage plants, and remove noxious weeds on 950 acres.

Rice Access Project

A Union County landowner is receiving an \$11,080 grant to allow by-permission public hunting on 1,231 acres of his property between August 1 and January 31, from 2011 to 2016.

Wilson Family Ranches Habitat Restoration

The Wilson Family Ranches in Union County will use \$10,000 in funding for habitat improvements to wetlands, meadows, riparian corridors, and upland areas on their property in the North Powder drainage. Improvement work includes berm construction, riparian fencing, and vegetation plantings.

C2 Ranch Access and Habitat Project

An \$11,000 grant to the C2 Ranch in Jackson County will help fund habitat improvement on 930 acres for black-tailed deer and wild turkey by removing invasive blackberry bushes, cutting decadent brush, and fertilizing meadows to promote growth of wildlife forage plants. The landowner will also provide guided deer, elk, and wild turkey hunts for a total of 43 youths and 4 adults.

Wendling Travel Management Area

A \$23,220 grant will be used to provide Oregon State Police patrols on nearly 90,000 acres of private timberlands in Lane County from the start of the archery season to the end of rifle buck season for the next two years. The area is within the Wendling Travel Management Area where the landowners allow public hunting access.



The Willamette Valley Goose Hunter Access Program will help address Canada goose depredation in the Willamette valley while providing waterfowlers with additional hunting opportunities. Photo by Jim Yuskavitch

Oregon Open Fields Projects

Columbia Basin Access Program

A \$273,862 federal block grant, provided through the 2008 Farm Bill, will be used to pay landowners in the Columbia River basin up to \$3 per acre to allow public hunting access to their properties for the 2011-2012 hunting seasons. In addition, funds will be used to hire a seasonal coordinator to facilitate the program and monitor hunter use and compliance. The Columbia Basin Access Program could add up to 95,000 acres of public hunting access.

Willamette Valley Goose Hunter Access Program

The 2008 Farm Bill is providing a \$273,862 block grant to open up to 95,000 acres of private land in the Willamette Valley to public access for goose hunting during the 2011-2012 waterfowl season. Part of the Oregon Open Fields program, it will provide payment of up to \$3 per acre to landowners who allow public hunting access to their properties and hire a seasonal employee to coordinate the program and monitor hunter use and compliance.

Access and Habitat Board
 Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
 3406 Cherry Avenue, N.E.
 Salem, OR 97303-4924



For information on applying for an Access and Habitat Program grant contact A&H Program Coordinator Matt Keenan at 3406 Cherry Avenue N.E., Salem, OR 97303-4924, 503-947-6087

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