The Access and Habitat Board was created by the 1993 Oregon Legislature and is funded by a $2 surcharge on hunting licenses. The Board identifies and recommends funding for projects that improve wildlife habitat and facilitate public hunting access on private lands.

**HIGH PLAINS PARTNERS**

By Jim Yuskavitch

It started in the mid-1960s, when two ranchers came to the department for help,” relates Bob Krein, district wildlife biologist for the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife’s Heppner Wildlife District. “They were having a problem with knapweed and thought the way to keep the weed problem down was to keep vehicles off of their property.”

Knapweed is an invader from Europe that has infested much of the grassland steppe in the Northwest. Growing up to three feet tall, it quickly outcompetes native plants and grasses and has become a serious problem in some areas.

The two ranchers who came to ODFW for help were allowing hunters to use their property, but felt that the vehicles being driven on their lands were contributing to the spread of the noxious weed. Because knapweed grows so tall, it easily becomes caught in the wheels and bumpers of vehicles, which then act as agents to spread the seeds to other areas. Each knapweed plant can contain up to 200,000 seeds.

By 1967, those ranchers, with about 45,000 acres of land between them in the foothills of the Blue Mountains in Morrow County, had formed a cooperative arrangement with ODFW to control knapweed and manage a public hunting program on their lands. A third landowner joined the effort soon after, bringing the total acreage to 63,000.

Today the Heppner Regulated Hunt Area involves ten private landowners and over 100,000 acres. Working closely with Krein and Heppner Wildlife District assistant wildlife biologist Russ Morgan, these landowners implement a variety of wildlife habitat enhancement projects on their lands while continuing to allow public access for hunting and other outdoor pursuits.

The properties are prime deer winter range, with 25 percent of the area’s mule deer herd wintering here. Nearly 1,000 Rocky Mountain elk spend the winter season on these lands as well. A variety of upland bird species can also be found here including pheasants, quail, Hungarian partridge, chukar and forest grouse.

This makes for a popular destination with hunters. Last season 1,100 deer hunters stalked the regulated hunt area. Over 500 came to hunt upland birds. Fishing for trout in the area’s small creeks attracts 60 to 100 people each year. Another 300 to 400 come annually just to hike and camp.

The popularity of the Heppner Regulated Hunt Area requires a certain amount of “people management.” This is where the landowners’ partnership with ODFW comes in particularly handy. For example, the Oregon State Police provides a cadet to patrol the area during hunting seasons. ODFW hires a seasonal employee to conduct patrols as well.

Habitat enhancement projects are a major activity on the hunt area including fencing projects, water development and forage enhancement. Knapweed control continues to be a priority activity.

A supporter of the Heppner Regulated Hunt Area, the Access and Habitat Board recently approved a $50,730 grant to hunt area landowners for a series of projects including developing more water sources, constructing additional livestock fencing and planting trees valuable to wildlife.

In the 30 years the Heppner Regulated Hunt Area has been in existence, the area open to public access has remained in the 80,000 to 100,000 range. In fact, Pioneer Resources, a local timber company, has just added another 19,000 acres to the grand total.

Says Krein: “You really have to appreciate the people who stay involved with the program.” And based on its 30 year history of success, it looks like the Heppner Regulated Hunt Area will be around for many years to come.

The Heppner Regulated Hunt Area is a popular year-round destination for hunters, anglers, campers and other outdoor enthusiasts.

Photo by Russ Morgan
Calendar of Events

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Contact</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>August 22</td>
<td>Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission Meeting</td>
<td>Portland</td>
<td>(503) 872-5268</td>
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<td>August 25</td>
<td>Access and Habitat Board Teleconference</td>
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<td>(503) 872-5260 extension 5349</td>
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<td>August 30</td>
<td>Deer and elk archery, general bear and cougar hunting seasons open</td>
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<td>September 1</td>
<td>Application deadline for Second Chance controlled hunts</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 26</td>
<td>Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission Meeting</td>
<td>Portland</td>
<td>(503) 872-5268</td>
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<tr>
<td>October 4</td>
<td>Eastern Oregon controlled buck rifle season and western Oregon general rifle season for Cascade and Coast buck deer opens</td>
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Oregon Hunters Association Recognizes A&H Affiliates

The Oregon Hunters Association presented a spate of awards at their annual convention on May 31, 1997, at the Eugene Hilton. Among the honorees recognized for their contributions to Oregon’s fish and wildlife resources, were several people who have been actively involved with the A&H Program over the past four years. The A&H Board would like to congratulate the following individuals and landowners for their achievements:

Gary Soules, Prineville                   OHA Member of the Year Award
Jerry Frampton, Baker City               OHA Special Recognition Award
Hedge Jarvis, Winchester                 OHA Special Recognition Award
David Wiley, Salem                      OHA Life Membership Award

OHA Landowner of the Year Awards

Chris and Donna Heffernan, North Powder  Citizen Category
Longview Fibre, Silver Falls Tree Farm  Corporate Category

Board Says Farewell to E.H. Van Blaricom

After nearly four years of service as a landowner representative on the Access and Habitat Board, E.H. Van Blaricom is moving on to other endeavors. A Joseph rancher and life-long outdoorsman, Van was instrumental in building bridges of cooperation and understanding between sportsmen, private property owners and the agriculture community.

His retirement at the July 23 board meeting brought gifts of appreciation including flyfishing gear, a commemorative plaque and an impromptu limerick by board member Kelly Smith. We’ll miss you Van!

To receive a free subscription to Oregon’s Access and Habitat Board News just fill out this form and mail it to: Access and Habitat Program, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Post Office Box 59, Portland, OR 97207

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Kitzhaber Signs A&H Reauthorization Bill

By Beth Waterbury

The Access and Habitat Program has been reauthorized for another six years by Governor John Kitzhaber’s recent signing of House Bill 2188. The bill received strong support in the Legislature, passing on a 56 - 0 vote in the House and a 25 - 3 vote in the Senate. The bill reauthorizes the surcharge on hunting licenses, providing funding for wildlife habitat and hunter access projects.

While the bill stayed essentially intact as originally submitted, a budget note was approved directing ODFW to provide detailed reporting of program expenditures and access benefits to the 1997 - 99 Oregon Legislature. In addition, the budget note directs the A&H Board to allocate program funds so that a minimum of one-half of total expenditures are provided to access project grants. The impact of the budget note on the A&H Program is expected to be minimal, as these terms are already being complied with voluntarily.

The successful passage of this bill and its resounding support in the Legislature is a tribute to the individuals who have participated in the A&H Program as grantees, ODFW field biologists, regional advisory council members and A&H Board members.

Raffle Hunt Results

Congratulations to the following nine hunters who won 1997 A&H Raffle Hunts at the OHA Annual Convention:

Western Oregon Combination Hunt
Russell Thackeny, Clatskanie, Ore.

Western Oregon Deer Hunt
Long M. Chao, Beaverton, Ore.

Northeast Oregon Deer Hunt
Richard Holtzman, Tigard, Ore.

Southeast Oregon Deer Hunt
Robin Oleman, Toledo, Ore.

Central Oregon Deer Hunt
Robert E. Graham, Albany, Ore.

Northeast Oregon Elk Hunt
Michael Rundlett, Bothell, Wash.

Southeast Oregon Elk Hunt
Dennis McGanty, McMinnville, Ore.

Central Oregon Elk Hunt
Randy French, Turner, Ore.

Western Oregon Elk Hunt
Jim Bakkensen, Portland, Ore.
Fish and Wildlife Commission Approves 9 New Access and Habitat Projects

**1. Salmonberry Access Project**

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife has received a $5,000 grant to develop foot access for hunters, anglers and other outdoor users to 15 miles of roadless river canyon along the Salmonberry River in Tillamook County in cooperation with the Port of Tillamook Bay Railroad.

An active railroad line runs along the river canyon and has historically been closed to public access due to the danger posed by train traffic. Funds from this grant will be used to develop safe pedestrian access to the area.

**2. Guss Elk and Deer Forage Enhancement Project**

A $2,150 grant has been awarded to Tom and Sue Guss to develop improved elk forage and to mitigate for elk-caused crop damage on 110 acres of their property near Blodgett, in Benton County.

This project involves renovation of pasture land by spraying for noxious weeds and planting high-quality elk forage. The project’s goal is to provide an adequate food source for existing elk herds without increasing their numbers. This area is considered prime coastal wildlife habitat.

**3. Linn Private Lands Law Enforcement Project**

The Linn County Forest Protective Association, a consortium of private timber companies, associations and federal, state and local agencies, has received a $3,000 grant to share in the cost of providing law enforcement patrols on 485,000 acres of private timberlands open to the public during hunting seasons.

**4. Bar Shoe Valley Wildlife Enhancement Project**

The Bar Shoe Valley Ranch, located northeast of Paulina in Crook County, has been granted $17,600 to enhance wildlife habitat on the property by constructing fencing, seeding and fertilizing dry land pasture, developing water sources and restoring streamside vegetation. The ranch owners provide public hunting opportunities on their 5,400 acre property on a by-permission basis.

**5. Mt. Jefferson Rifle, Archery and Pistol Association Education Center**

The Mount Jefferson Rifle, Archery and Pistol Association received a $5,000 grant to purchase audio-visual equipment to outfit classrooms for Hunter Education and Master Hunter programs.

The goals of the newly-constructed education center and shooting range include promoting hunter education, safe and responsible hunting, wise management of natural resources and responsible firearms ownership. The center will also serve as a base for community meetings and workshops focusing on natural resource issues.

**6. Cook Well Redrilling Project**

The Bureau of Land Management Lakeview District received a $1,500 grant as reimbursement for a portion of the cost of redrilling a well on federal rangelands in Lake County. The well will provide a water supply for mule deer, pronghorn and sage grouse, as well as help improve livestock distribution.

**7. Heppner Regulated Hunt Area**

Ten Morrow County landowners have received a $50,730 grant to continue providing year-round public access to 101,460 acres of private lands within the Heppner Wildlife Management Unit. Participating landowners receive a 50 cents per acre payment which may be used to improve wildlife habitat within the regulated hunt area through rangeland fertilization, weed control, tree planting, water development and fencing.

**8. Main, Mid and Upper Thibault Silvies River Riparian Enclosure**

Southworth Brothers, Inc., of Seneca, Oregon, has been awarded a $5,000 grant to construct three miles of fencing along the Silvies River on their Grant County ranch to improve livestock management in sensitive streamside areas. The landowners allow public hunting access to the property by permission.

**9. Mt. Harris Elk and Mule Deer Winter Range Project**

A $50,000 grant was awarded to the Union County Noxious Weed Agency to continue an ongoing yellow starthistle control program on 20,000 acres of private lands in the foothills area between Mount Harris and Cove, in Union County. This project will improve critical winter range for elk and mule deer. Participating landowners will allow public access by permission.
For information on applying for an Access and Habitat grant contact Beth Waterbury, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, P.O. Box 59, Portland, OR 97207 (503) 872-5260 x5349

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