

Public Correspondence*

Klamath and Ladd Marsh Wildlife Area Plans

Correspondence received as of March 14, 2008

(1/15/08 KWA meeting #1)

WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT WILDLIFE AREA MANAGEMENT?



The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife is seeking your comments regarding management of Klamath Wildlife Area. You can add your comments to the record by completing this form and turning it in tonight, faxing it to ODFW at 503-947-6009, or by sending an e-mail to ODFW.comments@state.or.us. All comments will be summarized and posted to the ODFW Web site.

enforcement of number of hunters in unit

good idea of swapping units with grains

cutting down bulbrushes and having more openings

Ducks Unlimited helping out with projects

Michelle Tate

From: Liz Bueffel
Sent: Monday, February 04, 2008 3:14 PM
To: Michelle Tate
Subject: FW: Ladd Marsh Wildlife Area Management Plan

Noticed you weren't cc'd on this one. :) Liz

From: ODFW Comments
Sent: Mon 2/4/2008 1:38 PM
To: Liz Bueffel; Nancy Breuner; Eric Rickerson; Cathy Nowak; David Larson
Subject: FW: Ladd Marsh Wildlife Area Management Plan

From: CraigInLaGrande@aol.com [mailto:CraigInLaGrande@aol.com]
Sent: Sunday, February 03, 2008 4:59 PM
To: ODFW Comments
Subject: Ladd Marsh Wildlife Area Management Plan

Planners,

I've read the draft management plan, attended the January 22nd meeting, and I would like to register my support for the direction ODF&W is going with respect to the management of Ladd Marsh Wildlife Area. I'm an avid birder and spend many hours on the marsh yearly. I participate in the volunteer surveys of birds on the marsh. I have noticed the big change in shorebird use of the marsh as projects to acquire and restore marsh habitat have been implemented over recent years. This speaks volumes about the improvement in the quality of habitat. For this reason I'd like to urge the continued search for opportunities to add additional lands that may be restored to the Ladd Marsh Area.

With the opening of the Tule Lake public access area the Marsh and it's wildlife resources have become much more accessible to the public. As a member of the local birding community I recognize the increased use of the area by birders. And not only is the Marsh attracting local birders but also birders from around the region. This brings added economic benefit to the area. For this reason I'd like to see management of the Marsh continue to look for opportunities to make the marsh more accessible, for example in the Peach Rd or Raceway units.

Many parts of the marsh have dried up in the summer in recent years due to the drought the region has been in for some time now. I'd like to see management look for opportunities to add more water to the marsh so habitats can remain wet all season long. This will make for greater breeding success for all shorebirds and waterfowl, and allow for longer use of the marsh by birds dependent on water. These added water resources might come from the purchase of water rights or by drilling wells. It may be that drought isn't the only factor, but that the water table is lowering due to demands put on it by other private and public needs. We may need to recognize that maintaining the marsh these days means supplementing the water with well water.

Thanks for allowing me to make comments.

Respectfully,

Craig Bennett
 2211 Cedar St
 La Grande, OR

Who's never won? Biggest Grammy Award surprises of all time on AOL Music.

James D. Ward
57923 Foothill Rd.
LaGrande, OR 97850

ODFW Wildlife Division
3406 Cherry Ave.
Salem, OR 97303

Public Correspondence
Topic Ladd Marsh

RECEIVED
JAN 31 2008
WILDLIFE DIVISION

Dear ODFW,

I'm writing this in regards to your upcoming management plan for Ladd Marsh. My property borders Ladd Marsh and I've lived here for 32 years. I've been an active volunteer for projects on the marsh and even formed a group - Friends of Ladd Marsh. So, obviously, I have a very keen interest in the future of the management area and might even suggest that I have a pretty good grasp of the current situation. I'm 56 years old and have been a wildlife fanatic all my life. I've been a wildlife photographer, birdwatcher and hunter for much of this time and I feel that I have rather good knowledge of what it takes to make the wildlife happy on the marsh and feel my following suggestions have at least some validity.

Certainly, I could write pages on the positive things I see regarding current management of the LMWMA. I believe you're very fortunate to have such a dedicated and competent Ladd Marsh crew out here. So, the following suggestions will concern ideas that I feel might need tweaking a bit or, perhaps, relate to matters that have changed since the last management plan.

ELK

I'm certainly aware that waterfowl production is the main focus for Ladd Marsh. And, a considerable amount of time and dollars have been spent towards this endeavor. I'm not sure if there is too much more that can be done to provide more waterfowl habitat on the marsh considering the limited water resources.

Currently, several hundred elk visit the LMWMA - especially in the fall and winter. And the elk use on the marsh seems to be increasing substantially. Truthfully, not too much effort is directed toward management of this species - other than what the animals can get from the crops grown for waterfowl and an occasional hay feeding or hazing effort when the critters wander on to nearby private land.

I would suggest that more effort be directed toward elk management on the LMWMA. I'm confident that this effort could be done with very little, if any, affect on the waterfowl program. And with the increasing elk depredation problem, any effort to encourage elk to spend more time on the LMWMA would most certainly help alleviate this situation.

I spend an enormous amount of time watching, hunting and photographing the Ladd Marsh elk herds and feel I'm fairly intimate with what makes these animals tick and what things could be done on the marsh towards their well being.

Firstly, an incredible amount of acreage exists on the LMWMA that could be "re-designed" to benefit elk. And, of course, it would be impossible to help elk without helping a whole array of other species as well. I would suggest planting some large coniferous plots on the LMWMA. This would give elk much better cover against the infamous winter winds we have out here. The management area has a vast assortment of soil types, so there is many areas that would be suited towards tree planting without taking much from the crop lands or wet meadows. These coniferous plots might help hold elk onto the management area, provide good cover and perhaps even ease their current preference of leaving the marsh every morning, damaging private fences, to bed in upper timber far from the marsh. As already suggested, these plots would most certainly provide interest to many other species.

Currently, a severe problem exists with Ladd Marsh area elk damaging neighboring crops and fences. These animals are seeking better forage than what the management area offers. Elk don't seem to relish those low protein grasses on the wet meadows and much of the LMWMA's uplands consist of low quality forage - grasses that elk don't like and weeds. Also, nearly all of the crops on the west side of the freeway are removed by the sharecropper with very little left for wintering elk.

There's no reason that some wheat couldn't be left standing for elk on the west side of the freeway. And, a more concerted effort in the timing of the alfalfa mowing might leave more of this for the elk as well.

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I've heard word that the local ODFW might consider offering fertilizer to a neighboring rancher to help his alfalfa crop that gets hit hard by elk each year. Fertilizing his fields would merely make his crop even more inviting to the depredating elk. I would suggest that your people use the fertilizer on the Ladd Marsh alfalfa and perhaps find another way to help the rancher. Maybe, this rancher could be given the rights to harvest a portion of the hay on Ladd Marsh, that exists next to his property, to help offset his losses.

A huge strip of land exists on the LMWMA's west side, between the hill and the wet meadows, that could be planted to more suitable forage for elk. Much of this has likely never seen a plow and, as I mentioned earlier, currently contains mostly volunteer grasses and weeds that elk shun. I suggest that your department send out people with an expertise in elk forage to design and plant these areas in grasses that would still provide cover for nesting gamebirds, yet be more suited for elk use. This would help the elk and perhaps discourage them from wandering to private land.

I also suggest that an effort be made to provide better quality crops on the management area for elk. And, perhaps, these crop fields could be put in more strategic locations to help head off these animals from private fields. I suggest the department look into providing a way to irrigate some of these crops. Even in drought years there is enough water on the LMWMA to, at least, give a shot of water to a field or two on the west side. A more succulent crop of alfalfa would be more attractive to the elk than the neighbor's field. And, it's very likely that the sharecropper might help with this irrigation if he could reap some of the reward for the increased yield this crop would give. Perhaps most of the second cutting could be left for the elk.

I suggest that the department look into experimenting with Kentucky blue grass. Elk and deer love it - that's why our area's grass seed farmers get so much elk damage each year. It's not native, but then either is the alfalfa or wheat grown on the marsh either. This could provide a first cutting for the sharecropper, some nesting cover for the birds and would be available to the elk and deer during the winter. A shot of fertilizer and a watering or two would make it especially attractive.

All of the above would cost money, but sportsmen's groups and others are often begging to help out with projects on this state's management areas. I'm confident they'd be happy to chip in on such things as grass seed, fertilizer and sprinkler pipe if they thought it would help the resource.

West Ladd Creek

When Ladd Creek enters the Grande Ronde Valley it is split into several diversions for irrigation. After flowing through private land it enters the LMWMA in three branches. The west branch runs along the west side of I-84 and through my property before it flows out onto the marsh. I'm very intimate with this little stream and how it's flow is managed. For 30 years I've been trying to establish riparian habitat along this stretch, first through my property and then down through the management area for a couple hundred yards. The trees did very well as long as I kept the water buckets coming (about a zillion) until they reached the creek's water table.

For the first twenty years I enjoyed this little ribbon of life flowing through a very dry upland before it spilled into the lower marsh ponds - about 3 miles down from the diversion dam. Every spring a huge run of native suckers would come to spawn, and although they were of no interest to fishermen, they certainly got the attention from the local herons, otters, mink and others. This little stream was surprisingly full of crayfish and there was trout, but they never got very large.

But, from the very beginning, I noticed the flow of this stream was determined only by the whims of the local sharecropper. Typically, the ODFW didn't pay too much attention to this stream management as they were very busy with other matters and, I guess, figured the sharecropper wasn't hurting much.

Then about 10 years ago things changed drastically. Maybe it was a mere coincidence, but this was the same year I had altercations with the sharecropper concerning wildlife management on the marsh. The entire stream was diverted to the east side in late June when there was still plenty of water for everyone. I remember going out and seeing the fish flopping in the drying pools the next day.

I didn't say anything. A good number of trees died along the west branch that year because they were denied water too early in the summer. The sharecropper normally doesn't divert water until much later and never took it all like that - even during very dry summers. And now, every year the entire stream is diverted early in the summer. Nearly all the trees are dead now; I never see the suckers come to spawn anymore and the last crayfish I seen was 10 years ago.

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Finally, I started trying to do something about this sad situation. I contacted the Ladd Marsh manager and he brought out the water master. They determined that the sharecropper was mostly within his rights to send water to some eastside private fields. It was also determined that the westside stream channel was heavily clogged (mostly from all the dead trees) and unable to allow at least a trickle to flow down. I heard that the ODFW fish people wouldn't allow the stream to be cleaned because it wouldn't be "natural". Actually, this entire stretch isn't natural as it was dug out as a strait channel all the way down.

So, here I am. I finally tried a different course. Since the west fork flows along I-84 and has been flowing over its banks in spring due to being clogged, I got the State highway people to clean it out. Although this was the driest year we've ever had the little stream had water in it all year. This probably had less to do with the cleaning job and more to do with the fact that the sharecropper gave up on watering his fields so much this season. He didn't even throw a board in the channel heading my way.

Although I've given up on trying to plant trees along this stretch anymore and still moan my loss of the incredible amount of time and money I spent on this endeavor, I'm still hoping a long term solution can be found to keep as much water in this stream as possible. Even a trickle could help another crop of volunteer riparian vegetation. And with the Ladd Marsh ponds so far away, a little water in west Ladd Creek would certainly help our local quail, pheasant and songbird broods during our typical dry spells.

I'm aware that wildlife don't have much say when it comes to water rights. But, in fact, a very senior water right still exists on a LMWMA parcel just downstream from me. If push comes to shove, perhaps exercising this right during the pinch time could keep more water in the creek. And since LMWMA wildlife is certainly affected by stream flow on the westside, perhaps, the ODFW could take a more concerted look at how the water is diverted and if the diversion structures need an overhaul. Your department spent a huge amount of money on two fish diversion stations both above and below my property, so it would seem that a few dollars could be spent on helping to insure that there is **actually** some water flowing through these structures.

And perhaps a closer eye should be kept on the sharecropper and what he's doing with the water that flows to the marsh. I think this fellow likes wildlife, but his interest in the hay may overcome his interest in those critters looking for a drink. Most often, it really isn't the fact that he uses the water, but it's when he takes it. As I mentioned earlier, he never used to take it all in June when there's plenty of water for everyone.

Aesthetics

Through the years I've seen an enormous increase in visitors to the marsh - especially those that come mostly to see the wildlife on their Sunday drives. I'm certainly aware that the Ladd Marsh crew has a limited amount of time and money, but I was hoping more effort might focus on giving the wildlife area a better look. A lot has already been done, but I'd like to see a continued push to remove those eyesores that take from the scenic beauty of the marsh. I suggest that the rest of the old, delapidated barns be removed and those sites be restored to habitat. These remaining structures have had little in them except pigeons, rats and skunks ever since I moved out there 30 years ago.

I hope the ODFW will continue to remove all the old railroad ties and rock jacks that exist along the management right-of-ways. Many of these are plastered with ugly signs or have remnants of the old fences that were removed. That portion of the marsh that runs between the Ladd Marsh viewpoint and I-84 seems to get the most use from Sunday drivers - coming to see the elk or waterfowl below the Foothill Road. Perhaps the ties could be replaced by nicer looking posts and the signing be done with a little more eye appeal. Some of the current posts are up too high and soon bend to the harsh winds. Maybe if they were lower they wouldn't bend so easily.

The Ladd Marsh viewpoint is quite a visitor attraction. The old, beaten down, barbed-wire fences surrounding this area would be best removed entirely as a good amount of wildlife passes over these especially at night. But, if there really is a strong need to have fencing around this, perhaps the old fences could be replaced with something more eye-appealing and wildlife friendly.

Visitor Needs

I was especially glad to see the auto-tour route and trail put in along Peach road. In the past, there was very little access to visitors unless you were a hunter. I hope the ODFW will continue to provide for future visitors. With minimal expense and labor, a few other projects could provide more opportunities for visitors.

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(4)

I suggest that the department look at doing something on the west side. Next to the RMEF acquisition boundary, above the Foothill Road (just south of the white barn), exists a little pull out that sits in a perfect location for visitors to view the marsh below. In fact, there is a much better view of the marsh from this site than even the viewpoint. It would be very easy to pitch out a picnic table or two at this site - maybe even pour a concrete slab for these so they don't sink or rot as quick. The mature trees here would make excellent shade for visitors at this site. It's even likely that volunteers could mow a little grass at this site and keep up with the possible litter.

It would even be very easy to construct a small nature trail from this site. Just a short hike up the hill would give visitors a beautiful view of the marsh. This would be an excellent site for a school bus load of kids to come out and see the marsh. A tiny bit of fill could make the turnout a little wider for buses. Certainly, if the department has plans for something like this at the viewpoint this shouldn't take away from the need to do something at this site. More sites would spread visitors out a bit.

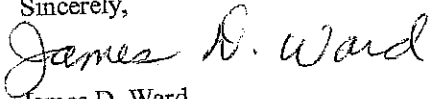
Also, at either this site, or from the white barn site next to it, I would suggest that the ODFW look into constructing a trailhead for horse use. Already, it's becoming quite common to see horse trailers at this spot during the nicer weather. I've rode up there many times and an often-heard suggestion is to make a loop trail so riders wouldn't have to back track down the old road after they come to the dead-end at the private property line. This would give riders a more pleasant experience.

It would be very simple to run a trail off the hill from the old road and connect it back to the trailhead. Perhaps the department could get help from a horse club or a forest service trail crew, so this new loop would work well with horse riders and the topography. Along the way, a bench or two could even be installed at a key viewing site. And, of course, a hitching post system might be good at the trail head. Certainly, this trail would likely become quite popular with foot hikers as well and could even be connected, at some point, with the before-mentioned nature trail.

As for wildlife harassment from this trail, I really wouldn't expect much as most big-game don't really come into this area much except during the winter when the trail would be snowed in. And most of the animals push further up the hill to bed anyway, above the trail area, so there really wouldn't be much negative interaction between wildlife and horse riders during the spring and summer. Of course, if there was a concern it would be easy for the department to close the trail during critical times. Most riders would visit the trail at mid-day during the summer with minimal wildlife harassment.

Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to provide input on a wildlife area that is so dear to my heart. I've very much enjoyed being a neighbor to this wildlife area and have relished the time I've spent with the Ladd Marsh crew out here. Certainly, if any of my suggestions have ruffled some feathers I can assure you that it was never my intention.

Sincerely,



James D. Ward
57923 Foothill Road
LaGrande, OR 97850

Michelle Tate

From: ODFW Comments
Sent: Thursday, January 31, 2008 2:03 PM
To: Cathy Nowak; David Larson; Liz Bueffel; Eric Rickerson; Nancy Breuner; Michelle Tate
Subject: FW: Ladd Marsh Wildlife Management Plan

From: Cathy [mailto:cathy@hellscanyon.org]
Sent: Thursday, January 31, 2008 9:52 AM
To: ODFW Comments
Subject: Ladd Marsh Wildlife Management Plan

Dear Friends,

I would like to share my wish list of management changes for Ladd Marsh WMA. I live in La Grande and regularly visit Ladd Marsh WMA to walk and view wildlife.

My wish list:

1. Hunting and wildlife viewing are incompatible activities. Wildlife viewers should have opportunities to use the refuge when there are no hunters present. During the hunting season one can only use the nature trail on the same days as hunters - this is not pleasant for either hunters or wildlife viewers! Obviously if hunters are shooting - little, if any wildlife can be seen. And if wildlife viewers are flushing waterfowl, then hunters are not pleased. And of course there is the danger to viewers being shot by hunters. Please open the refuge to wildlife viewing during the hunting season on days when hunters are not present. We should have equal access to the refuge for our activities.
2. I applaud and encourage your ongoing restoration - there are a LOT of weeds out there and I hope you can accelerate restoration activities, especially planting of native species of grasses, forbs and shrubs. More trees would be nice too.
3. I suggest the refuge build a nature trail on the Glass Hill portion of the refuge. This could be a project involving volunteers on a work day once a plan is in place.
4. I really appreciate Ladd Marsh WMA's participation in International Migratory Bird Day through the establishment of the annual Ladd Marsh Birdathon. This event provides a unique opportunity for increased wildlife viewing (the entire refuge is open to the public). The entire refuge is also available for the Union County Christmas Bird Count - unfortunately the refuge is also open to hunting on that day. This is one specific example of incompatible usage. I request that the Refuge be closed to hunters during the Christmas Bird Count.

5. Please construct a viewing platform and bathrooms. The lack of bathrooms is a major concern for lots of visitors (especially women) and a viewing platform would enhance and display the refuge.

Thanks for your time and consideration. Feel free to contact me with questions.

Sincerely,

Cathy Trochlell
2409 East N Ave
La Grande, OR 97850
962-7819

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Version: 7.5.516 / Virus Database: 269.19.17/1253 - Release Date: 1/31/2008 9:09 AM

Michelle Tate

From: Nancy Breuner
Sent: Friday, February 01, 2008 12:19 PM
To: Michelle Tate
Subject: FW: Ladd Marsh 10 year plan

Email #2...

-----Original Message-----

From: Terry McElrea [mailto:tlmac55@hotmail.com]
Sent: Saturday, January 19, 2008 12:12 PM
To: ODFW Comments
Subject: Ladd Marsh 10 year plan

Thanks for soliciting comments regarding the marsh's next 10 year plan!

As a fairly hardcore hunter for the last 41 years, I have hunted some of the best and some of the worst public lands in our nation. Ladd marsh is a relative sleeper, in the fact that it is well managed and has the opportunity to be the crown jewel in Oregon. This year was full of conflict because of the low water situation. This congested the waterfowl hunters to point that there was not enough room for everyone. It also created a new breed of slob hunter, too lazy to pack out their own decoys, they setup near others and pass shot birds working our sets. We also saw shooting hours not being observed, up to 30 minutes before and after hours! We need to see some enforcement presence not just on opening weekend. I do not however want to see it turn into anything like the over policed and over regulated McCormick Unit in Umatilla!

We need a reliable water source for the marsh, whether that's treatment pond discharge, or ground wells, this is critical for hunter dispersal and habitat enrichment for the wildlife. I believe it was 3 years ago when the marsh was full of water and all of the ponds and ditches were overflowing with wildlife. We had GREAT success all season long on both upland and waterfowl. I believe water is the key to success on the marsh.

I have had some truly enjoyable hunts with friends and family in the marsh! it's a long 4 hour drive for us and it isn't getting any cheaper, but as long as we have a reasonable chance, and a quality experience we will continue to use the resource. Thanks to all who have managed and cared for this piece of heaven in Oregon!

Regards,
Terry McElrea
236 SW 36th ST.
Gresham, OR 97080

503-667-4221

Connect and share in new ways with Windows Live.
http://www.windowslive.com/share.html?ocid=TXT_TAGHM_Wave2_sharelife_012008

Michelle Tate

From: Nancy Breuner
Sent: Friday, February 01, 2008 12:18 PM
To: Michelle Tate
Subject: FW: Ladd Marsh 10 Year Plan

Michelle,
Here's email #1...

-----Original Message-----

From: Mark Girard [mailto:mlnjgirard@msn.com]
Sent: Saturday, January 19, 2008 8:02 AM
To: ODFW Comments
Subject: Ladd Marsh 10 Year Plan

Thank you for soliciting comments from the public regarding Ladd Marsh. Living in La Grande allows me the privilege to enjoy the great opportunities this public land offers. Dave Larson and David Brunson do a great job managing this resources with a good balance of enforcement and educating those that use this for the many activities it offers; Hunting, Bird Watching, Dog Training, etc..

My activity is hunting, both upland and waterfowl. With the low water year we had this past season, it created quite a congested hunting due to the limited water available to hunt waterfowl. Speaking with others that hunt this area, we all shared a level of frustration at the unethical behavior of other hunters. We had numerous instances of others using our decoy spreads/calling to pass shoot duck/geese as they worked our sets. Another popular activity was to setup between others and shoot passing ducks as they circled. Other situations of not following the open times (4:00 AM) of the marsh and posted shooting hours were observed. I believe these unfortunate acts could have been avoided if pumps were installed to create more open water areas NW of Peach Road during these types of dry seasons. Whether it involves pumping water from existing sources (sewer treatment ponds) or from underground - all would benefit from this action, including the wildlife!

We truly have a gem with this resource and I applaud those assigned with the stewardship of this area. Having hunted the Federal Umatilla Refuge and not being an advocate of the heavily regulated rules applied in these public lands, I do not want to see that ever happen in Ladd Marsh!

Respectfully submitted,

Mark Girard
La Grande, OR
541-663-0305