

# Agenda Item Summary

## BACKGROUND

Through HB 2538, the 1993 Oregon Legislative Assembly created the seven-member Access and Habitat (A&H) Board. This legislation authorized the A&H Board to review and recommend to the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission (Commission) projects designed to improve wildlife habitat and public hunting access in Oregon. The 2003 Oregon Legislative Assembly reauthorized the program through December 2009. Project proposals are typically submitted by landowners, corporations, organizations, and agencies. Applications are initially reviewed by board-appointed regional advisory councils established in six geographic regions of the state. The councils forward proposals to the A&H Board with recommendations to approve or deny projects. The A&H Board provides the next level of project review and then forwards proposals to the Commission for final consideration and approval to expend A&H Program funds. Because the A&H license surcharge is scheduled to sunset this December, the Board decided at a previous meeting to generally fund access projects for only one year at a time until the fate of the program is known.

## PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The A&H Program provides for public involvement through the regional advisory councils and A&H Board meetings. The meetings are advertised in advance, notices are published on the department's website and in the program's newsletter and agendas are mailed to interested citizens. There is an opportunity for interested parties to provide public comment during these meetings. The A&H Board most recently met on January 27, 2009 in Salem, Oregon.

## ISSUE 1

### Project Funding Approval

## Project 1

### #2009-01 Jenkins Access Project

## ANALYSIS

- A&H Funds: \$33,283
- Cooperator Funds: \$0
- Total Project Cost: \$33,283
- Applicant: Rich Jenkins
- Location: Malheur Watershed District
- Access Duration: August 1, 2009 – March 1, 2010
- Access Acres: 13,233
- Council Vote: Yes: 4; No: 0
- Board Vote: Yes: 7; No: 0

The proposed project would pay the landowner \$33,083 to allow open public hunting on 13,233 acres of private land from August 1, 2009 to March 1, 2010. In addition, \$200 would be spent on signs to identify the project area. The total A&H cost for one year of hunting access would be \$33,283.

The Jenkins Access Project was added the A&H Program in August 2008 and has proven to be a success for the landowner and hunters alike. Located in the Steens Mountain Wildlife Management Unit, the property provides excellent mule deer, elk, pronghorn and sage grouse hunting. In addition to the private land access this project provides it also opens a road that significantly improves access to 60,000 acres of BLM land.

The Malheur Regional Advisory Council and the A&H Board both voted unanimously to approve this project as proposed (for one year only).

**Project 2**

**#2009-02 Jordan Access Project**

**ANALYSIS**

- A&H Funds: \$7,550
- Cooperator Funds: \$5,200
- Total Project Cost: \$12,750
- Applicant: Dan Jordan
- Location: Malheur Watershed District
- Access Duration: August 1, 2009 – March 1, 2010
- Access Acres: 640
- Habitat Acres: ¼ mile of fencing
- Council Vote: Yes: 4; No: 0
- Board Vote: Yes: 4; No: 3

The proposed project, as approved by the A&H Board, would pay the landowner \$1,600 per year to allow public hunting access to 640 acres from August 1 - March 1 of the 2009/10, 2010/11, and 2011/12 hunting seasons (for a total of \$4,800 in access payments). In addition, A&H would provide \$2,750 to fund half of the fence construction; the landowner would be required to fund the other half.

Located in the Steens Mountain Wildlife Management Unit, the Jordan Access Project has been enrolled in A&H since August 2008 and has received high use by hunters and recreational enthusiasts alike. The property offers hunters good mule deer, pronghorn, sage grouse, and elk hunting, as well as a scenic base-camp at a forty-acre public campground around Pate Lake. The high mountain meadows provide excellent big game forage and sage grouse nesting cover, but are severely degraded by trespassing livestock (primarily sheep). The fencing components of this project are for protection from these trespassing animals; the landowner does not run livestock on the property.

The original proposal submitted to the A&H Board included funding for one year of hunting access (\$1,600), all fencing materials (\$5,500), and gate installation (\$1,400; the landowner would purchase gates for \$1,050), for a total project cost of \$9,550. The Malheur Regional Advisory Council voted unanimously to fund the access and fencing components, but not the gate installation. The A&H Board voted 4:3 to fund only 50 percent of the fencing costs (and require the landowner to fund the other 50 percent), and to not fund the gate installation. The motion also increased the access duration to 3 years (at \$1,600 per year) to reassure the landowner that

A&H is interested in the long-term viability of the project and to ensure that Oregon hunters reap the benefits of the habitat work. The dissenting voters felt that fencing is the landowner's responsibility.

**Project 3 #2009-03 Smutz Access Area**

**ANALYSIS**

- A&H Funds: \$3,985
- Cooperator Funds: \$0
- Total Project Cost: \$3,985
- Applicant: Irwin Smutz
- Location: Grande Ronde Watershed District
- Access Duration: August 1, 2009 – July 31, 2010
- Access Acres: 1,414
- Council Vote: Yes: 6; No: 0
- Board Vote: Yes: 6; No: 1

The proposed project would pay the landowner \$3,535 to allow open public hunting on 1,414 acres of private land from August 1, 2009 to July 31, 2010. In addition, \$450 would be spent on signs to identify the project area and maps to distribute to hunters. The total A&H cost for one year of hunting access would be \$3,985.

In August 2008, the Smutz Access Area was added to adjacent A&H lands (including Glass Hill Conservancy, Forest Capitol LLC, and RMEF Glass Hill properties) to create the Glass Hill Access Area. Located in the Starkey Wildlife Management Unit, this project (as well as adjoining Ladd Marsh Wildlife Area) provides opportunities to hunt mule deer, white-tailed deer, elk, bear, cougar, coyote, turkey, waterfowl, pheasant, Hungarian partridge, California quail, and blue and ruffed grouse.

The Northeast Regional Advisory Council unanimously voted to approve the project as proposed and commented that area would receive high levels of hunter use due to its proximity to the town of La Grande and the popularity of the surrounding hunting area. The A&H Board voted 6:1 to approve only one year of project funding, instead of the three years that was proposed. The one dissenting vote came from a Board member who wished to fund the project for the entire three years.

**Project 4 #2009-04 Forsea Access Area**

**ANALYSIS**

- A&H Funds: \$22,992
- Cooperator Funds: \$0
- Total Project Cost: \$22,992
- Applicant: Dan and Renece Forsea
- Location: Grande Ronde Watershed District
- Access Duration: August 1, 2009 – January 31, 2010
- Access Acres: 9,330
- Council Vote: Yes: 6 ; No: 0
- Board Vote: Yes: 7 ; No: 0

The proposed project would pay the landowner \$22,392 to allow open public hunting on 9,330 acres of private land from August 1, 2009 to January 31, 2010. In addition, \$600 would be spent to print signs that identify the project area and maps to distribute to hunters. The total A&H cost for one year of hunting access would be \$22,992.

The Forsea Access Area has been enrolled in the A&H program since 2003 and has proven to be one of the program's highest quality access properties for Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep, mule deer, elk, bear, cougar, and upland game birds. The project site is located in the Lookout Mountain Wildlife Management Unit, which has been identified as the highest priority area for ODFW Baker District staff to maintain or open private land for public hunting access.

The Northeast Regional Advisory Council unanimously voted to recommend this project for approval, and noted that the area has received a tremendous amount of use during the first five years in the A&H program. The A&H Board also unanimously voted to approve the project as proposed.

**Project 5**

**#2009-05 Widman Access Area**

**ANALYSIS**

- A&H Funds: \$17,460
- Cooperator Funds: \$0
- Total Project Cost: \$17,460
- Applicant: Mike Widman
- Location: Grande Ronde Watershed District
- Access Duration: August 1, 2009 – December 1, 2009
- Access Acres: 8,430
- Council Vote: Yes: 7; No: 0
- Board Vote: Yes: 7; No: 0

The proposed project would pay the landowner \$16,860 to allow open public hunting on 8,430 acres of private land from August 1 to December 1, 2009. In addition, \$600 would be spent to print signs that identify the project area and maps to distribute to hunters. The total A&H cost for one year of hunting access would be \$17,460.

The Widman Access Area was enrolled in the A&H Program for the 2008 hunting season and both the landowner and ODFW staff have been satisfied with hunter use and morale. With the additional publicity that the project has received over the past year, we would expect increased hunter use in 2009. The Widman property is located in the Lookout Mountain Wildlife Management Unit, which is characterized by its trophy mule deer and excellent chukar hunting opportunities. The mid elevation sagebrush steppe and high elevation conifer/aspen habitats also support increasing populations of elk and pronghorn. The project site is located less than 10 miles from the (A&H) Forsea Access Area and the potential exists to enroll additional landowners to create a large block of quality private land open to public hunting.

The Northeast Regional Advisory Council and the A&H Board both voted unanimously to approve the project as proposed.

**Project 6**

**#2009-06 Bloomer Access Area**

**ANALYSIS**

- A&H Funds: \$ 6,048
- Cooperator Funds: \$ 0
- Total Project Cost: \$ 6,048
- Applicant: Gary Bloomer
- Location: Grande Ronde Watershed District
- Access Duration: August 1, 2009 – January 31, 2010
- Access Acres: 2,724
- Council Vote: Yes: 6; No: 0
- Board Vote: Yes: 7; No: 0

The proposed project would pay the landowner \$5,448 for allowing open public hunting on 2,724 acres of private land from August 1, 2009 – January 31, 2010. In addition, \$600 would be spent on signs to identify the project area and maps to distribute to hunters.

The proposed Bloomer Access Area is located in the southern portion of the Sumpter Wildlife Management Unit, which contains 75 percent private land and has historically been prone to elk damage. A long cow season is in place to address the damage, and increased public access would help to achieve the goals of this management effort. The steep sagebrush habitat is interspersed with juniper, mountain mahogany, and numerous springs, supporting elk, mule deer and upland game birds. In addition to the 2,724 acres of private land, this project would also provide hunting access to 120 acres of previously landlocked public land.

The Northeast Regional Advisory Council and the A&H Board both voted unanimously to approve the project as proposed.

**Project 7**

**#2009-07 Owsley Canyon Access Area**

**ANALYSIS**

- A&H Funds: \$1,870
- Cooperator Funds: \$0
- Total Project Cost: \$1,870
- Applicant: Don Shaw
- Location: Grande Ronde Watershed District
- Access Duration: April 15, 2009 – April 14, 2010
- Access Acres: 435
- Council Vote: Yes: 6; No: 0
- Board Vote: Yes: 7; No: 0

The proposed project would pay the landowner \$870 to allow public hunting access on 435 acres of private land. The access period would be from April 15, 2009 – April 14, 2010. In addition, \$700 of A&H funds

would be used to purchase a 4' X 6' sign and \$300 would be used to print maps.

Located in the eastern portion of the Mt. Emily Wildlife Management Unit, the Shaw Family Ranch is currently managed for cattle grazing and hay production, and supports mule deer, white-tailed deer, elk, cougar, bear, turkey, pheasant, Hungarian partridge, California quail, and blue and ruffed grouse. Because of its close proximity to the town of La Grande, the Owsley Canyon Access Area would provide great youth hunting opportunities. The project would also help ODFW - Union Wildlife District control an elk population that causes chronic damage to agricultural lands in the Grande Ronde Valley.

The Northeast Regional Advisory Council and the A&H Board both voted unanimously to approve the project as submitted.

## Project 8

### #2009-08 Abiqua Basin Access Area

#### ANALYSIS

- A&H Funds: \$2,050
- Cooperator Funds: \$4,599
- Total Project Cost: \$6,649
- Applicants: Capital Chapter, Oregon Hunters Association
- Location: North Willamette Watershed District
- Habitat Acres: 36,535
- Access Duration: October 3, 2009 – November 6, 2009
- Council Vote: Yes: 6; No: 0
- Board Vote: Yes: 6; No: 0

\*Ron Borisch abstained from voting due to direct involvement with the project.

The proposed project would reimburse Oregon Hunters Association (OHA) volunteers \$0.55 per mile for travel to the Abiqua Basin Access Area during the rifle deer and elk seasons to open and close the main gate at the beginning and end of each day. An additional \$400 in A&H funds will also be used for signs and maps of the property, for a total A&H payment not to exceed \$2,050.

The OHA Capital Chapter has run this gate-opening access project in cooperation with Longview Timber Co. since 1992. By closing the gates at night, the volunteers help reduce poaching and minimize vandalism and damage to the gates. Longview Timber Co., in turn, agrees to maintain drive-in access to the 36,535 acre Abiqua Basin portion of their Silver Falls Tree Farm during the rifle deer and elk seasons. These industrial timberlands also provide walk-in hunting access for bear, cougar, coyote, grouse, quail, and band-tailed pigeons.

The North Willamette Regional Advisory Council unanimously voted to approve the project as proposed. The A&H Board voted to approve the project as proposed, with the exception that volunteer mileage would be

reimbursed at the current federal mileage reimbursement rate of \$0.55 per mile instead of the proposed \$0.585 per mile, for a total A&H grant of \$2,050 (as opposed to \$2,155 as submitted).

**DRAFT MOTION**

I move to approve the recommendations of the Access and Habitat Board for project funding.

**EFFECTIVE DATE:**

March 20, 2009