

**Staff Summary  
Projects Recommended for Funding  
Access and Habitat Board**

The Access and Habitat (A&H) Board met in Bend on October 20, 2009, to review seven projects requesting funding from the A&H Program. A project must receive at least four supporting votes to be recommended for funding; all seven Board members attended the meeting. A summary of each project, funding requested, designation as access and/or habitat funding, and Board and Council votes are listed below. Major issues raised are identified below, if applicable.

The Board recommends funding the following projects:

**#2009-24 Russell Canyon Water Enhancement**

- A&H Funds: \$18,625
- Cooperator Funds: \$18,900
- Total Project Cost: \$37,525
- Applicant: Gerald G. Scanlan
- Location: Klamath Watershed District
- Access Duration: January 1, 2010 – January 1, 2015
- Access Acres: 2,500
- Habitat Acres: 2,000
- Cooperators: Scanlan Ranch
- Council Vote: Yes: 6; No: 0
- Board Vote: Yes: 6; No: 0

The Russell Canyon Water Enhancement Project would grant \$18,625 of A&H funds to purchase materials to reconstruct two small ephemeral ponds and build two 2,500 gallon water tanks. Water would be pumped from the ponds to the tanks via a solar pump during the spring and returned to the ponds in the summer, providing clean water for wildlife on a year round basis. Fencing materials to protect the ponds from livestock use would also be included in the A&H grant. The landowner would construct all water improvements for an in-kind contribution of \$18,900.

The Scanlan Ranch provides critical winter range for approximately 1,500 deer; the current deer population in this area is at 40% of management objective. Water is a limiting resource on the ranch during summer months and these water improvements would increase the presence of resident wildlife populations and supply the public with additional hunting opportunities throughout the year. The ranch would provide public hunting opportunities for deer, bobcat, cougar, coyote, dove, squirrel, and quail.

## #2009-25 Summer Lake Wetland Enhancement

- A&H Funds: \$75,000
- Cooperator Funds: \$1,001,522
- Total Project Cost: \$1,076,522
- Applicant: ODFW - Summer Lake Wildlife Area
- Location: Klamath Watershed District
- Habitat Acres: 3,000
- Cooperators: Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB), Ducks Unlimited, North American Wetland Conservation Act, Summer Lake Irrigation District, Lake County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD).
  
- Council Vote: Yes: 7; No: 0
- Board Vote: Yes: 4; No: 2

The Summer Lake Wetland Enhancement Project would replace 1.3 miles of open earthen canal with a pipeline to supply water for irrigation and wildlife use on about 3,000 acres of private and public (Summer Lake Wildlife Area) wetland and upland habitat. This segment of canal is currently losing 10-20% of diverted water to seepage and leaks through the sides and bottom of the canal. The retention of this water will enhance waterfowl nesting habitat and production, improving hunting opportunities and success. The additional water delivered to these lands will also increase meadow productivity and forage production for private livestock operations.

A&H funds will be used to help purchase the 7,000 feet of required pipe; project cooperators would purchase the remainder of the pipe and would fund project surveys, planning, design, management, and pipe installation. Dissenting voters were concerned about the strain this project would put on the A&H budget.

## #2009-26 Murderers Creek Winter Range Enhancement

- A&H Funds: \$50,000
- Cooperator Funds: \$222,330
- Total Project Cost: \$272,330
- Applicant: ODFW - John Day District Office
- Location: John Day Watershed District
- Habitat Acres: 1,135
- Cooperators: ODFW – John Day, Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs, United States Forest Service (USFS)
  
- Council Vote: Yes: 5; No: 0 (motion on original request for \$101,000)
- Board Vote: Yes: 5; No: 1

This project would enhance critical mule deer habit by removing encroaching western juniper on 1,135 acres. A&H funds would hire a private contractor to clear 455 acres of juniper on the P.W. Schneider Wildlife Area. The Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs would assist ODFW – John Day staff in the treatment of additional acreage on the wildlife area. The USFS would fund juniper removal on adjacent federal property.

All of these lands fall within the Murderers Creek Coordinated Resource Management Area, a 120,000 acre block of public land that facilitates landscape-scale habitat improvements within the Murderers Creek Wildlife Management Unit (WMU), which is one of five WMUs to be identified as part of ODFW's Mule Deer Initiative.

The original project proposal requested \$101,000 of A&H funds to clear 920 acres of juniper. The Board recognized the importance of supporting the Mule Deer Initiative, but voiced concerns including the seemingly high cost of juniper cutting (\$110/acre) and the fact that the project would be conducted entirely on the public land and not near the public/private interface. The final (approved) motion was to fund only \$50,000 for this project. The dissenting voter on this motion voiced a continued concern about funding habitat projects that did not benefit private landowners.

### #2009-27 Sundry/Rooster Rock Habitat Improvement

- A&H Funds: \$50,000
- Cooperator Funds: \$1,929,800
- Total Project Cost: \$1,979,800
- Applicant: Sullivan Z Ranch
- Location: Grand Ronde Watershed District
- Access Duration: January 1, 2010 – December 31, 2011
- Access Acres: 9,600
- Habitat Acres: >10,000
- Cooperators: Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), Baker County SWCD, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF), Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF), U.S. Forest Service (USFS), Bureau of Land Management (BLM), ODFW – Baker District, Landowners
  
- Council Vote: Yes: 5; No: 0
- Board Vote: Yes: 4; No: 2

The Sundry/Rooster Rock Habitat Improvement Project is a landscape-scale cooperative effort to clear over 10,000 acres of western juniper on private, USFS, and BLM lands. A \$50,000 A&H grant would be used to hand-fall juniper on 617 acres of private land (Sullivan Z Ranch); cooperator funds would be used for juniper treatment on both public and adjacent private lands. The project area supports very high densities of wintering Rocky Mountain elk and mule deer, as well as healthy populations of upland game birds (including sage grouse) and turkeys. Juniper removal will benefit many wildlife species and is a key strategy to the recovery of both mule deer and sage grouse.

Public access to the Sullivan property would be provided on a registration-basis, where hunters would be required to check in at the Baker ODFW District Office. This would allow district staff to distribute maps and regulations and to quantify hunter use. There would be no restrictions on the number of hunters allowed or on species or season of harvest. Dissenting voters on this project were concerned about the ongoing cost associated with juniper control projects.

## #2009-28 Blue Mountains Elk Initiative (BMEI) 2009

- A&H Funds: \$100,000
- Cooperator Funds: ~\$2,687,275 (2008 BMEI)
- Total Project Cost: ~\$2,787,275 (2008 BMEI)
- Applicant: Mark Henjum, BMEI Coordinator
- Location: Northeast and High Desert Regions
- Habitat Acres: ~13,000 (2008 BMEI)
- Cooperators: Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF), US Forest Service (USFS), Blue Mountain Habitat Restoration Council, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), BMEI, various sporting and landowner groups, private landowners.
- Council Vote: Yes: 5; No: 0
- Board Vote: Yes: 6; No: 0

The Blue Mountains Elk Initiative (BMEI) is a federal, state, private, and tribal partnership created in 1990 to deal with elk management and habitat issues in the Blue Mountains region. The project area encompasses 19 million acres and is recognized as the first and largest elk initiative established in North America. The initiative was established to provide clarity and direction in an environment of conflict and disagreement in regards to elk management between various stakeholders in the region. Individual projects focus on elk habitat restoration and include activities such as noxious weed prevention/eradication, aspen restoration, spring development, juniper management, riparian protection, fencing, winter range management, and controlled burns.

The BMEI has been supported by the A&H Program since 2006. It is unique among Access and Habitat projects, in that the A&H Board approves earmark funding to be expended on future projects that are approved through the BMEI/RMEF application review process. The Northeast Regional A&H Coordinator decides which of these projects the Access and Habitat funding will support. The state A&H Coordinator ensures that all projects meet any criteria set forth by the A&H Board and fit the objectives of the Program before the grant agreement is established. All projects must meet a minimum match funding ratio of 1:1 (cooperator funds : A&H funds). The Board voted unanimously to fund the 2009 BMEI project for \$100,000, 30% of which may be spent on public lands near the public/private interface.

## #2009-29 Hay Creek Habitat Restoration

- A&H Funds: \$25,200
- Cooperator Funds: \$12,000
- Total Project Cost: \$37,200
- Applicant: Western Rivers Conservancy
- Location: John Day Watershed
- Access Duration: January 1, 2010 – December 31, 2011
- Access Acres: 8,016
- Habitat Acres: 100
- Cooperators: Gilliam County Weed Master, Pheasants Forever, Non-Typical Farm and Ranch Consultants, Western Rivers Conservancy.
- Council Vote: Yes: 5; No: 0
- Board Vote: Yes: 5; No: 2

The Hay Creek Habitat Restoration Project is located on the former Murtha Ranch, which was purchased by Western Rivers Conservancy (WRC) in October 2008. A&H funds would be used to eradicate weeds, plant grasses, shrubs, and trees, develop small water impoundments, and for project administration. Cooperator funds would be used for administration, fencing, and additional grass plantings. These restoration efforts are part of a larger management plan to restore the riparian habitats and return native species to adjacent shrub steppe and grassland habitats after several years of habitat degradation.

WRC has sold 1/3 of the purchased property (sale did not include proposed project area) to the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (State Parks), and intends to sell the remainder of the property to that agency within approximately 3 years. However, WRC currently allows hunting access and has installed kiosks and signs to help facilitate public use. Additionally, WRC has requested that State Parks continue to allow public hunting after the purchase. State Parks has agreed in concept and has offered ODFW a seat at the table to help write the management plan for the property. This land offers deer, elk, bighorn sheep, predator, pheasant, turkey, and other upland game-bird hunting opportunities.

Dissenting voters voiced opposition to the use of A&H funding (\$4,500) for project administration, and a concern that there was no formal agreement with State Parks to provide continued public hunting access.

## #2009-30 Rogue Meadows Enhancement

- A&H Funds: \$16,000
- Cooperator Funds: \$8,000
- Total Project Cost: \$24,000
- Applicant: Vince Oredson, ODFW – Rogue WD
- Location: Rogue Watershed
- Access Duration: March 1, 2010 – June 30, 2013
- Access Acres: 170
- Habitat Acres: 200
- Cooperators: Rogue Valley Chapter Oregon Hunters Association (OHA), Boy Scouts, ODFW – Rogue WD, landowners.
- Council Vote: Yes: 7; No: 0
- Board Vote: Yes: 4; No: 2

The proposed project would reimburse six landowners a total of \$16,000 for 27 tons of fertilizer to be applied March – May, 2010-2013. ODFW – Rogue Watershed District would contribute 8,000 for an additional 13 tons of fertilizer. The fertilizer would be applied by ODFW staff, OHA and other volunteers, or by landowners. Tractors, ATVs, and fertilizer spreaders would be provided by ODFW and OHA. Local boy scouts assist with miscellaneous projects, including bridge repair.

These privately owned fertilized meadows are highly attractive to elk, which compete with the landowners' cattle for forage. Reimbursement for fertilizer will help to compensate the landowners for their loss, and will improve forage conditions for elk. Four of the landowners provide "welcome to hunt" access to their property, while the other two feel the parcels are too small. However, with the large amount of surrounding public land and the migratory nature of elk, hunters should have access to these animals.

Dissenting voters were concerned about the perpetual strain that these fertilizer (damage) projects impose on the A&H budget.