

Agenda Item Summary

BACKGROUND

ORS 497.360 requires that, with certain limited exceptions, no person younger than 18 years of age may hunt wildlife without satisfactorily completing a hunter education training course prescribed by the Commission or by an agency of another state. That statute also requires that the Commission prescribe and administer a hunter safety training program, but leaves administration of the program to the Commission.

In the 1940's, states began taking steps to reduce the frequency of hunting incidents and began requiring hunter education, also known as hunter safety, for hunters. Today, all 50 states have some hunter education requirement, although the laws vary from state to state. Standardized requirements were developed by the International Hunter Education Association (IHEA), and in 1999 the International Hunter Education Association-USA (IHEA-USA) and the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) adopted a set of performance guidelines for basic hunter education courses. These standards, which are followed by all states and industry partners, outline the minimum body of knowledge necessary for safe, legal and responsible hunters. Oregon's hunter education training meets the IHEA standards, and in some regards exceeds them. For example, Oregon has opted to make a field day, which includes a hands-on component, part of all hunter education courses.

In 2014, the IHEA-USA Standards Committee evaluated the hunter education standards to ensure they were meeting the necessary performance guidelines. The IHEA-USA also updated, and all State Hunter Education Program Administrators and AFWA member agencies approved the standards to reflect changes in teaching technology such as use of DVD's, interactive tools and video demonstrations. These technological advances have improved the quality of hunter education courses and have helped reduce the time needed to cover course material. For example, before 2007, hunter education courses in Oregon were primarily taught in a classroom setting and included a hands-on field component and live fire exercises. This format required on average twenty-two hours to complete a basic hunter education course. The use of more advanced teaching tools has helped reduce course length.

In 2007, Oregon added the option for students to take hunter education online and complete a required hands-on field day. This option is extremely popular. More than 2,500 students used this option in 2013. Students take an average of six to eight hours to complete the online portion and an additional six to eight hours for the field day. It is possible that a student could complete the course in less than twelve hours.

Staff proposes deleting the minimum course length requirement in OAR 635-048-0005 to reflect changes in teaching methods that result in more efficient hunter education certification.

Deleting the minimum course length requirement also provides additional flexibility to meet the demand for hunter education instruction for adults.

Oregon law does not require adults over 17 to have hunter education certification, although other states have stricter requirements. Colorado, for example, requires individuals born on or after January 1, 1949 to show proof of completion of hunter education before purchasing a license. Every year, the department hears from Oregon adults wanting to take hunter education before hunting in Colorado or other states. Staff proposes offering an online only option to people 18 years and over. A number of states, like Texas and Minnesota, have adopted an online only format for adults. No field day is required, allowing adults to complete the course in six to eight hours. An online only option meets IHEA standards, and would allow Oregon adults to more easily meet hunter education requirements in other states.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The board of the Oregon Hunter Education Instructors Association was briefed in early 2014.

Four regional hunter education conferences were held in 2014 across the state. This rule change was presented to over one hundred volunteer hunter education instructors.

Email correspondence was sent to all Oregon hunter education instructors. Oregon currently has more than 600 certified instructors.

ISSUE 1

Hunter education course of instruction is currently set to a minimum of 12 hours. This does not reflect current teacher techniques or allow for online only option for adults.

ANALYSIS

Staff proposes deleting the requirement that all hunter education courses have a minimum of 12 hours of instruction.

ISSUE 2

Current administrative rule does not reflect the department standard that persons younger than 18 must complete both a classroom and a field component in order to receive hunter education certification.

ANALYSIS

To implement ORS 497.360, staff proposes adding administrative rules that require persons younger than 18 years to satisfactorily complete both a classroom and a field component to receive hunter education certification. This change also increases flexibility for issuing certificates to adults wishing to complete hunter education training.

OPTIONS

1. Approve staff proposal.
2. Amend staff proposal.
3. Reject staff proposal

**STAFF
RECOMMENDATION**

Option 1

DRAFT MOTION

I move to amend OAR Chapter 635, Division 048 as proposed by staff.

Upon Filing

EFFECTIVE DATE