

Summary of Projects Recommended for Funding

The Access and Habitat (A&H) Board met in Salem on January 12, 2016 to review projects requesting funding from the A&H Program. A project must receive at least four supporting votes to be recommended for Commission approval. A brief description of the projects, funding requested, access and habitat benefits provided, as well as Board and Council votes are provided in this summary. If major issues were raised they are discussed below.

The A&H Board recommends funding the following projects:

#2016-01 Willamette Valley Goose Hunter Access Program

- A&H Funds: \$257,364
- Cooperator Funds: \$233,382
- Total Project Cost: \$490,746
- Applicant: Isaac Sanders, A&H Program Coordinator
- Location: Willamette Valley portions of Benton, Clackamas, Columbia, Lane, Linn, Marion, Multnomah, Polk, Washington, and Yamhill counties, primarily those portions within the Northwest Goose Permit Zone.
- Access Acres: ~5,500
- Access Duration: 2016-2021 waterfowl season; dates vary by landowner
- Cooperators: NRCS, ODFW field staff
- Board Vote: Yes: 7; No: 0

The Willamette Valley Goose Hunter Access Program requests a block grant to open an estimated 5,500 acres of private land to public goose hunting in the Willamette Valley. Funding would be provided by a grant received from the NRCS through the Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program, a component of the 2015 Farm Bill. ODFW has been awarded approximately \$1.5 million (distributed over three years) to be used for specific programs, including the Willamette Valley Goose Hunter Access Program. This federal funding award is collectively referred to as Oregon Open Fields. As proposed to the NRCS, all Open Fields programs are to be approved by the Access and Habitat Board and the Fish and Wildlife Commission.

The proposal includes \$183,114 for an Open Fields Coordinator (NRS1) for 6 months during 2016-2018 and 4 months for years 2019-2021. The coordinator will recruit properties, post and maintain signs, collect permits and schedule "by-permission" hunts. \$70,000 would be used to pay landowners up to \$3 per acre to allow public hunting for up to five-year contracts and \$4,250 is included for signs and permit collection boxes.

This program is a priority due to chronic goose depredation experienced by agricultural producers in the Willamette Valley and the lack of public hunting opportunities in the region.

#2016-02 Columbia Basin Access Program

- A&H Funds: \$487,364
- Cooperator Funds: \$233,382
- Total Project Cost: \$720,746
- Applicant: Isaac Sanders, A&H Program Coordinator
- Location: Columbia Basin Ecoregion
- Access Acres: ~20,000
- Access Duration: 2016-21 hunting season; dates vary by landowner
- Cooperators: NRCS, ODFW field staff
- Board Vote: Yes: 7; No: 0

The Columbia Basin Access Program requests a block grant to open an estimated 20,000 acres of private land to public hunting in the Columbia Basin. Funding would be provided by a grant received from the FSA through the Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program, a component of the 2015 Farm Bill. ODFW has been awarded approximately \$1.5 million (distributed over three years) to be used for specific programs, including the Columbia Basin Access Program. This federal funding award is collectively referred to as Oregon Open Fields. As proposed to the NRCS, all Open Fields programs will be reviewed by the Access and Habitat Board and approved by the Fish and Wildlife Commission.

The proposal includes \$183,114 for an Open Fields Coordinator (NRS1) for 6 months during 2016-2018 and 4 months for years 2019-2021. The coordinator will recruit properties, maintain signage, collect permits and schedule "by-permission" hunts. \$300,000 would be used to pay landowners up to \$3 per acre to allow public hunting for up to five year contracts and \$4,250 is included for signs and permit collection boxes.

This program was included in the proposal to the FSA because of the public interest and opportunity to increase public hunting access in the Columbia Basin. Most properties opened through this program would provide upland game bird hunting, one of the most popular ways to introduce youth or inexperienced hunters to the sport.

#2016-03 Pine Creek Ranch Access Area

- A&H Funds: \$145,250
- Cooperator Funds: \$400 (hunting administration; in-kind)
- Total Project Cost: \$145,650
- Applicant: Donald Dryer
- Location: Malheur Watershed District
Malheur River WMU (69% public lands)
- Access Acres: 12,104
- Access Duration: 5 years: August 1 – March 1, 2016 – 2021
- Cooperators: Donald Dryer
- Council Vote: Yes: 6; No: 0
- Board Vote: Yes: 7; No: 0

The Pine Creek Ranch Access Area would provide five years of public hunting access to 12,104 acres of private land from August 1 to March 1 of each year. The A&H Program would reimburse the landowner \$2.40 per acre for each of the five years.

Located in the Malheur River Unit, this property supports mule deer, elk, pronghorn, predators, and upland game birds including sage-grouse. This project has been enrolled in the A&H program since 2011. Prior to enrollment in the A&H program, the Dryer family experienced problems with trespass, littering, gates left open, cut fences, cross-country vehicle travel, and illegal camping.

Two check-in kiosks have been installed on the access area. Seventy-five permit cards were returned during the 2013-14 hunting season. One hundred and twenty permit cards were returned during the 2014-15 hunting season and 83 permit cards have been returned to date for the 2015-16 hunting season. Average satisfaction as reported on permit cards is 3.71 on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 Not Satisfied, 3 Satisfied, and 5 very satisfied.)

#2016-04 Brown/Lawen Access Area Expansion

- A&H Funds: \$2,640
- Cooperator Funds: \$100
- Total Project Cost: \$2,740
- Applicant: Vern Brown Jr.
- Location: Steens WMU (64% public land)
- Access Acres: 440
- Access Duration: 3 years: August 1 – March 10 2016-2019
- Cooperators: Vern Brown Jr
- Council Vote: Yes: 6; No: 0
- Board Vote: Yes: 7; No: 0

The proposed project would be part of A&H Program's current Lawen Access Area and would provide public access to 440 acres of private land for three years. The acreage offers waterfowl hunting, good pheasant and predator hunting, and occasional deer hunting. With these lands, the Lawen access area would provide Oregon hunters with a total of 6,259 acres of productive waterfowl and upland hunting near the Malheur National Refuge.

This project was formally known as the Miller Access Area and enrolled in the A&H program in 2006. Vern Brown recently purchased the property and would like to continue participating in the program. Most of the adjacent land is private, except to the south which is part of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge.

ODFW began collecting hunter use data in 2012. Since 2012, hunter satisfaction has averaged 3.13 on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 Not Satisfied, 3 Satisfied, and 5 very satisfied.)