



# OREGON HUNTERS ASSOCIATION

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Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife Commission  
4034 Fairview Industrial Drive SE  
Salem, Oregon 97302  
Invited Panelist input – RE: Chesnimnus Elk Redistribution Project  
April 20, 2016

Dear Chair Finley and Members of the ODFW Commission:

The Oregon Hunters Association (OHA) appreciates the opportunity to participate in this panel input on the critical statewide issue of moving elk from private to public lands. Elk redistribution issues are complex by nature and this one has many social and biological variables to consider. However, the stakeholders involved have been cooperative in trying to achieve solutions. Reaching solutions will not be easy, and it is likely that this effort will need multiple years before producing lasting results. The ultimate goal is to establish a template for accomplishing a four pronged goal of reducing agricultural conflict; enhancing public land hunting opportunities; and developing both short term and long term actions. It is hoped that the elk redistribution “prescriptions” developed in the Chesnimnus Unit can be applied more broadly, in different situations, across Oregon and other western states.

The history of elk management in the Chesnimnus Unit involves many phases over several decades. In earlier years the elk favored the public canyon lands to the far north part of the unit, but in the past decade the tendency has been more and more for elk to occupy the private lands on the more southerly end of the unit, known as Zumwalt Prairie. Elk numbers across this unit have reached over 5,000 animals, well above Management Objectives (MO’s). This year new MO’s were established at 3,500 with a localized goal of 700 animals on the private portion of the Zumwalt Prairie (slide will show area involved). To accomplish this goal there needs to be two conditions: 1) significant hunting pressure on elk occupying private property, and 2) incentives for elk to move onto public land and stay there.

Attempting to accomplish 1) & 2) above has stimulated a collaborative effort by stakeholders. The first effort has involved the private landowners coordinating on allowing hunter access, which has involved this group developing a “Zumwalt Landowner Permission Sheet,” with guidance from the OSU extension service and additional coordination from ODFW - Northeast Region. This effort has really enhanced the profile of elk management on private property in this area and is starting to show results.

More recently, OHA initiated forming a public lands group to plan ways to encourage elk to move further north and “ideally,” stay on public lands. The public lands planning group includes

representatives from OHA, USFS, OSP, TNC, the NP Tribe, and a private hunter. Our efforts have included multiple meetings to identify problems and propose solutions, and conducting elk survey flights to document seasonal distribution. We have also coordinated, and sharing flight information, with an ODFW biologist conducting bi-monthly flights over private land to determine pre and post hunting-season elk distributions. Our group has identified an “elk corridor” (see map attached) that identifies the portion of public land where more intensive management actions will be proposed to encourage elk redistribution. Proposed actions within this corridor will include:

- 1) Habitat enhancement using controlled burns, seeding, and possibly fertilizing.
- 2) Access management – road closures – during key times for disturbance, such as during hunting seasons.
- 3) Reduce hunting pressure – such as during archery season – on public land to balance with increased elk hunting on private property, so that elk have “security areas” to move to.

We recognize that all of these actions will necessitate coordination with multiple private and public entities. Initially, we polled 46 Chesnimnus Unit recreational users to get input on hunting season travel restrictions, and 82% supported these closures (given the justification) as long as the public had access before and after the hunting seasons for firewood gathering and other activities.

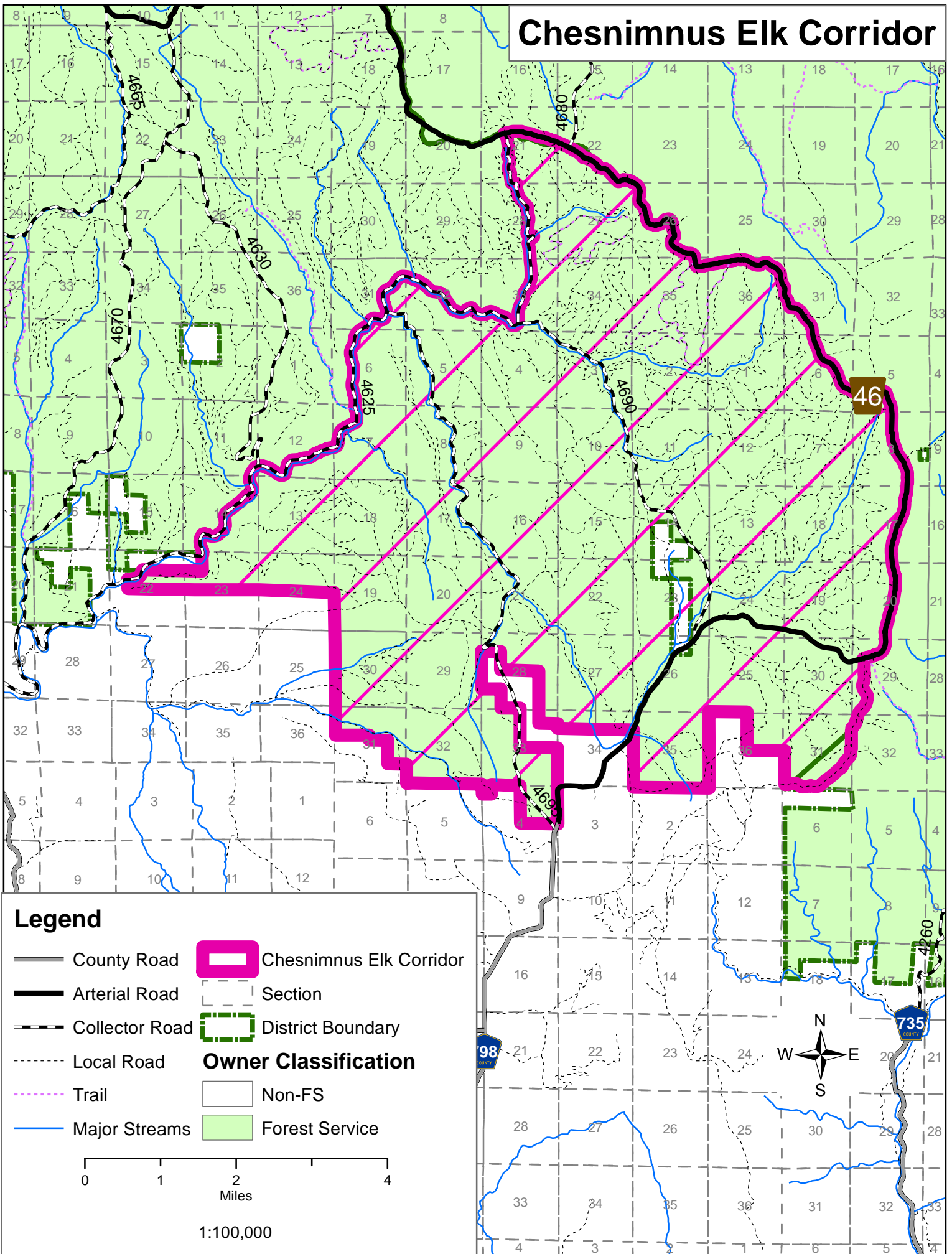
We recognize that this effort will take time, money, and stakeholder collaboration. Yet, only applying increased hunting pressure on private lands will not work if there are not incentives provided for elk to stay on public owned property.

Sincerely,












*Jim Akenson*

Jim Akenson  
Conservation Director  
Oregon Hunters Association

# Chesnimnus Elk Corridor



## Legend

- |  |                |   |                         |
|--|----------------|---|-------------------------|
|  | County Road    |  | Chesnimnus Elk Corridor |
|  | Arterial Road  |  | Section                 |
|  | Collector Road |  | District Boundary       |
|  | Local Road     | <b>Owner Classification</b>   |                         |
|  | Trail          |  | Non-FS                  |
|  | Major Streams  |  | Forest Service          |

0 1 2 4  
Miles

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