



ODFW Field Reports

Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission

EAST REGION

Bruce Eddy, Region Manager

Big Game Agricultural Damage

Eastern Oregon has been exceptionally cold and wet this winter with areas receiving several inches to several feet of snow. With the heavy snow and cold temperatures, big game (primarily elk and deer) are forced out of their traditional winter range and down to lower elevations to find food, open water, and respite from the weather. Many Wildlife Districts are seeing big game move to high value agriculture areas and congregating in higher than usual numbers on wintering pasture.



As eastern Oregon landowners struggle to deal with more big game and the resulting problems, they request help from Wildlife District staff. In addition to the circumstances of this winter, there is an overall trend of elk spending more time on private lands than on public lands. There are many reasons for the preference shift of elk for private lands; increased human activity on public land and habitat shifts are two examples. As a result, Districts are receiving more requests for help every year.

ODFW has a number of tools to help landowners and it is important that they contact a local District office to develop individualized solutions. There are often simple actions they can take to help ease their circumstances. For instance, leaving gates open when cattle are not in the pasture to allow elk

to funnel through the gate instead of jumping over fences. This can help reduce the amount of time landowners need to spend mending fences broken by an elk or deer herds. Other tools include hazing, barriers (haystack fencing, stackyard fencing, and exclusion fencing), removal (hunting seasons, damage tags, kill permits), trap and transplant, and habitat development (regional habitat, green forage, deer enhancement and restoration (DEAR), Access and Habitat program, etc.). Winter feeding is often the solution of last resort because of the potential for it to cause reoccurring problems and cost.

Addressing a big game damage problem is a delicate operation. It requires cooperation and understanding by all parties implementing a combination of methods and often, cooperation among adjacent landowners. While most landowners are understanding and tolerant of big game on their properties, the damage big game cause is both a workload and economic issue for landowners.

Hatcheries in winter

Many of Oregon's fish hatcheries are located in beautiful settings. During summer and fall, these places are great to visit; winter is a different story. The elements gang up on most of our facilities during winter to create difficult conditions for both our staff and the fish.



Lookingglass Hatchery, located along Lookingglass Creek in a remote part of northeast Oregon is a good example. Lookingglass has been subjected to freezing weather since the end of November and temperatures have been below 0°F since the middle of December. A low water alarm was

triggered on January 6, notifying staff that something had happened to their water supply. Responding staff found the entire intake structure and surrounding area inundated with ice, logs, rocks and debris. An ice dam upstream of the facility had broken and the resulting wave had settled on the Lookingglass intake. Water to the facility was completely choked off and almost three million fish and sac fry were at risk of suffocation.

Staff immediately began using pike poles, spud bars, and warm high-pressure water from a well to free up the travelling screens protecting the hatchery and to create a free flowing channel of water through the ice. The crew worked on clearing ice while reinforcements from across East Region started moving towards Lookingglass to help. Eventually a channel was dug through the ice and flow was restored. At this point it doesn't appear Lookingglass lost any fish.

All of our hatcheries are dealing with heavy snow, iced up water intakes and ponds, and very cold conditions this year. Our hats are off in appreciation to the facility and liberation staff that keep them running and the fish they produce.

WEST REGION

Steve Marx, Region Manager

Mountain Quail Transplanted to Nevada

Mountain quail are found throughout Oregon, but are a Conservation Strategy Species in the Northern Basin and Range Ecosystems. Biologists have augmented these ecosystems by translocating Mountain quail from western Oregon to eastern Oregon. The state of Nevada has similar conservation ambitions.

Nevada identified an area in the Fish Creek Mountains of central Nevada as an area they would like to establish Mountain quail. They started by implementing conservation measures such as improved livestock grazing plans. Believing the habitat in this area could then support mountain quail, the Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDW) arranged a translocation project with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife.

In a conservation partnership, District staff from Roseburg trapped 100 Mountain quail in early January. NDW biologists came to the Roseburg

compound January 6 and transported all 100 mountain quail back to Nevada. NDW will pen the birds through the winter and release them this spring to establish a new sustainable population of quail.



Willamette Valley Conservation Partnerships

The West Region Habitat Renovation Crew spent time in January planting milkweed, camas, and wild onion on a prairie and wetland enhancement project with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. These native plant species are important components of healthy prairie habitats and the wildlife species that depend on them. The particular site pictured is south of Brownsville, Oregon on 580 acres, and is being transformed into wildlife habitat under a unique partnership between the Natural Resource Conservation Service, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.



The restoration project initiated 10 years ago now provides habitat for Western Meadowlarks, raptors, waterfowl, migrating shorebirds, and a range of other resident and migratory birds. Less

visible is a diverse biotic community of invertebrates, amphibians, reptiles, and small mammals dependent on prairie and wetland habitats.

A memorandum of understanding (MOU) was developed between ODFW and USFWS approximately 15 years ago. The two agencies have since worked together to complete many habitat conservation projects covering several thousand acres on private and public lands across the Willamette Valley. Under the MOU, the two agencies are authorized to share and operate each other's equipment to improve wildlife habitat on private land. This arrangement is the only program of its kind in the state and one of only a few in the nation.

INFORMATION AND EDUCATION

Rick Hargrave, Deputy Administrator

New Web Project

The new ODFW customer-focused web project has entered the implementation phase. The website will provide up-to-date information to help support new customers get connected to Oregon's many hunting, fishing, crabbing and clamming opportunities. For the more experienced customers, the new website will continue to provide the recreation report, stocking schedules, and real-time notices on regulation updates. The fishing and hunting regulations will continue to be hosted on the E-regs platform for the time being. Online sales, hunter information, and class registration will continue to be provided by Active Outdoors.

Our current site (dfw.state.or.us) will still be important and relevant. Although the site's consumer content will migrate to the new site, we will continue to use the current site to highlight ODFW's work around the state. It will also be the information source for other functions of the agency, like commercial licenses and permits, conservation and management plans, public meeting notices, press releases, public records requests, contact information, and much more.

The new website has a lot of potential and will give us a platform to integrate social media, direct email marketing campaigns, embed how-to videos and communicate more effectively to customers. However, it's important to understand that the

website will be a work in progress, even after launch. It will take time to migrate content and restructure the current site. In addition, content identified to be moved to the new site may need to be restructured and rewritten. Despite these challenges, this project offers a contemporary foundation for the agency's customer content and data it also offers new and user-friendly ways to leverage it. For more information, contact David Lane, 503 947-6013.

Take a Friend Hunting Contest 2017-Incentive Program

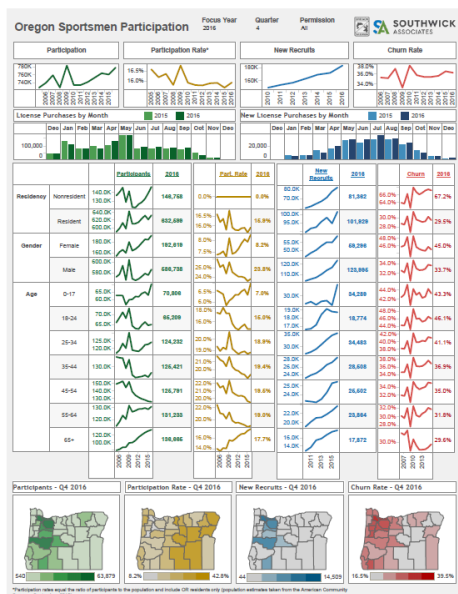
The Oregon Department of Fishing and Wildlife will launch the "Take a Friend Hunting Contest" in February. During the research phases of the ODFW Hunter Outreach and Awareness campaign, a need was identified to build support and guidance for new adult hunters. As a result, an incentive-based program has been established to encourage experienced hunters to mentor new adult hunters. Hunters that commit to mentoring a new hunter will be eligible to enter a contest to win prizes sponsored by identified stakeholders and industry leaders. I&E Division is leading this effort and working with Pac/West Communications to develop a creative website to support the contest. For more information, contact Michelle Dennehy, 503 947-6022.

Hunter Education Area Coordinator's Conference

The 2017 Hunter Education Area Coordinator's Conference was held January 28th and 29th at The Riverhouse conference center in Bend. Area Coordinators are lead volunteers who serve as liaisons between the state's hunter education program and the other volunteer instructors residing and teaching in their counties. In addition to receiving agency and programmatic updates, area coordinators were briefed on the planning status of the 2017 International Hunter Education Association's national conference being held in Oregon this upcoming May. They were also trained on various technologies being deployed in the hunter education program and provided valuable input on revisions to the student manual, tests, and instructor training processes.

Hunter and Angler Participation Scorecards

At the end of each quarter, ODFW receives cumulative year-to-date scorecards summarizing key sportsmen statistics. Metrics include participation, trends, and customer demographics relative to hunting, fishing, shell fishing, and a handful of other priority opportunities. The scorecards show that in 2016, participation in



fishing increased by 3.3%, participation in hunting increased by 9.4% and participation in shell fishing increased by 22.9%. These are very positive results given license and tag fee increases took effect in 2016. The scorecards also show good gains in the number of first time hunters and anglers. However, the percentages of participants who purchased a license in 2015, but not in 2016 (churn rates) are higher than we would like to see. ODFW will continue to implement strategies aimed at recruiting new participants, retaining current participants, and re-activating former participants.

2017 Pacific Northwest Sportsmen's Show

ODFW will again have a significant presence at the upcoming 2017 Pacific Northwest Sportsmen's show at the Portland Expo Center. In addition to booth space, ODFW will provide an opportunity for show attendees to meet and talk to Director Melcher and the Commissioners at a "Meet & Greet" on Thursday, February 9th. There will also be a "Crabbing and Clamming in Oregon" seminar on February 10th, and an "Understanding Oregon's Controlled Hunts" seminar on February 12th.

MARINE RESOURCES PROGRAM

Caren Braby, Marine Resources Program Manager

Blue and Deacon Rockfish Stock Assessments

Marine Program staff are busy preparing for several 2017 federal stock assessments, with particular attention to the recently divided species group of the Blue and Deacon (aka blotched) rockfish. Once considered a single species, Blue and Deacon rockfish are now managed together (as part of the Nearshore species group) but are tracked separately in Oregon's fishery monitoring. MRP staff helped describe Deacon as a separate species in 2015, and is now building expertise identifying the differences between the two species in their distribution across the coast, life history characteristics, and age and growth patterns. Department staff with special expertise in aging rockfish otoliths, or ear bones, are busy going through our archive of otoliths to count the growth rings (analogous to tree rings) and estimate ages. The federal stock assessment this summer will incorporate information on the age and growth differences of Blue and Deacon rockfish for the first time and will lead to an improved understanding of the differences between these two species.



A rockfish otolith or ear bone

Dungeness Crab Fishery and HABs

Oregon's ocean commercial Dungeness crab fishery is scheduled to open each year on December 1. For two years in a row (2015 and 2016), we have had a month-long delay in the season start. The delay was due to the persistence of harmful algal bloom (HAB) toxins in crab tissue, above the public health threshold. Crabs feed on a number of things that can contain these toxins, including living razor clams. However, they also feed on dead animal matter, sediment,

and other material that can hold onto the toxins long after the bloom itself has dissipated. While the fishery is now open and crabs are once again safe and available for everyone to eat, predictions are that climate change and related changing ocean conditions will increase the frequency and intensity of HAB events in the future. Department staff are working to plan for these more frequent events through monitoring programs, coordination with other agencies, and the fleet itself.

OREGON STATE POLICE

Captain Jeff Samuels, Fish & Wildlife Division



Winter Range Mule Deer. Photo Credit: USFWS

Oregon State Police Fish and Wildlife Troopers will be conducting saturation patrols on Oregon's winter ranges to protect deer and elk from illegal activity and poachers. Fish and Wildlife Troopers will be enforcing vehicle road closures that are critical in protecting wintering game.

Winter habitat is found predominately in lower elevation areas of Eastern Oregon. These areas usually have minimal amounts of snow cover and provide a combination of geographic features, topography, and vegetation that provides structural protection and forage. Due to the low nutritive values of available forage during the winter, deer and elk are forced to rely on their body reserves acquired during the summer for winter survival.

Saturation patrols of the White River Wildlife Area, Silver Lake Unit, Fort Rock, Paulina and Metolius units are augmented by additional ODFW funds for overtime and will be of special emphasis because they are home to thousands of wintering deer and elk.

The Oregon State Police Fish & Wildlife (OSP F&W) planes will be providing aerial support to Fish and Wildlife Troopers for winter range patrols and are a highly effective resource in helping catch poachers and vehicles operating in closed roads on winter ranges. OSP F&W has three fixed-wing aircraft located in Salem, Bend, and Baker City.

**END OF FIELD REPORTS FOR
February 10, 2017**