

## Summary of Projects Recommended for Access & Habitat Funding

The Access and Habitat (A&H) Program is funded by three primary sources. The majority of the revenue, approximately \$1.7 million per biennium, comes from a \$4 surcharge on hunting licenses. Biennial proceeds from deer and elk auction and raffle tags contribute ~\$920,000. An allocation of ~\$40, 000 from the Green Forage and Deer Enhancement and Restoration programs combined make up the remainder of the A&H Program revenue; a total of over \$2.6 million per biennium.

The Access and Habitat (A&H) Board (Board) met April 11, 2017 and by teleconference April 25, 2017 to review projects recommended for funding by the Regional Councils (Council). To be recommended for funding a project must receive at least four supporting votes from the Council or Board. All projects received letters of support from the local District Wildlife Biologist. A brief description of the funding requested, access and habitat benefits provided, as well as Council and Board votes follows.

The A&H Board recommends funding the following nine projects:

### #2016-12 Mackenzie Access Area Amendment

- A&H Funds: \$19,200 (\$4,800/year)for amendment
- Cooperator Contribution: No additional funds for amendment
- Total Amendment Value: \$19,200
- Applicant: Duncan “Wannie” Mackenzie
- Location: Owyhee Wildlife Management Unit (WMU)
- Access Acres: 2,000 additional acres
- Access Period: August 1 through March 1
- Project Duration: 2017 through 2021
- Council Vote: Yes: 5; No: 0 Abstain: 1
- Board Vote: Yes: 5; No: 1

The Mackenzie Access Area is a combination of properties managed by three brothers; each brother has a separate Access and Habitat Project Grant Agreement. This proposal amends the Duncan “Wannie” Mackenzie project approved last year to add an additional 2,000 acres of “Welcome to Hunt” access to his existing 4,813 acre A&H access agreement. The cost of the additional acres is \$4,800 per year for a total amendment amount of \$19,200 over four years. The four remaining payments will use the new total of 6,813 acres and the same payment rate of \$2.40 per acre.

This addition to the existing Mackenzie Access Area will increase the total access area to 11,029 acres and provide a new and unique bottom ground hunting opportunity for pheasants, quail, pronghorn antelope, and deer hunting in the Owyhee WMU.

The addition is new to the A&H Program and no past hunter use data is available. Based on the area’s proximity to Boise, and the availability of irrigated bottom ground,

use of this parcel will likely be at least comparable if not better than the existing project. Survey card data (N=57) from the existing project in 2015 indicates most users were very happy with the project giving an average rating of 4, on a likeness scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being very satisfied. The hunt surveys are voluntary and under-report the usage of the A&H access areas.

The existing access area receives heavy use from hunters seeking deer, high desert elk, pronghorn, bighorn sheep, predators, and upland birds. The area attracts many non-resident bird hunters from Boise, Nampa, and Caldwell Idaho.

Mackenzie Ranch first joined A&H in 2006; previous projects included purchase of cattle guards and funds for road maintenance, in addition to access payments. In 2012, the Mackenzie Ranch received Open Fields funding for habitat work to control medusahead, construct spring improvements, and repair waterholes.

One Board member did not support the recommendation to fund the project due to concern about a potential conflict of interest. The applicant Duncan “Wannie” Mackenzie is a landowner representative on the A&H Malheur Regional Council. Mr. Mackenzie did not participate in council discussion of the project and abstained from voting on the project.

#### #2017-05 Troy Ranches Access Area

- A&H Funds: \$51,265 (\$10,253/year)
- Cooperator Contribution: \$2,500 (\$500/year)
- Total Project Value: \$53,765
- Applicant: Troy Ranches
- Location: Lookout Mountain and Sumpter WMUs
- Access Acres: 5,696 private and 1,797 inaccessible public
- Access Period: August 1 through January 31
- Project Duration: 2017 through 2022
- Council Vote: Yes: 5; No: 0
- Board Vote: Yes: 6; No: 0

This project would pay Troy Ranches \$10,253 (\$1.80 per acre) per year for “Welcome to Hunt” access on 5,696 acres of private land in the Lookout Mountain and Sumpter WMUs. The period of access will run from August 1 through January 31 for a period of five years. The properties offer mule deer, Rocky Mountain elk, pronghorn, bear, cougar, coyote, and upland game bird hunting. This project also provides access to 1,797 acres of inaccessible public land and adjoins two other A&H funded projects, M.R. King Ranches Access Area to the northeast, and Virtue Flat Access Area to the northwest.

Public hunting access to private lands in the Lookout Mountain WMU (38% public lands) is a high priority for the Baker Wildlife District, in part due to increasing elk populations in the WMU. The 2016 winter elk population estimate of 1,200 is double the Lookout Mountain WMU elk management objective of 600. Gaining and maintaining access for hunters to private property is important to Department efforts to address elk damage through redistribution and reducing the population.

Troy Ranches enrolled in the A&H program in 2010 with renewals in 2011 and 2014. With seven parcels scattered over the Lookout Mountain and Sumpter WMUs, collecting hunter use data has been challenging. In 2014, Department Staff installed seven voluntary survey kiosks at strategic locations throughout the access area. During the 2014, 2015, and 2016 hunting season's staff collected 70 survey cards. The majority of hunters gave the area a more than satisfied rating.

Department staff and the landowners feel the number of surveys returned underestimate hunter use on this property. Department personnel conducting hunter checks over the past several years have observed individuals fortunate enough to draw a Lookout Mountain pronghorn tag using the properties extensively during pronghorn season. Upland game bird hunters use the access area in substantial numbers and this information is not reflected in the hunter use data from the surveys.

### #2017-06 MR King Ranches Access Area

- A&H Funds: \$44,750 (\$8,950/year)
- Cooperator Contribution: \$2,500 (\$500/year)
- Total Project Cost: \$47,250
- Applicant: M.R. King Ranches Inc.
- Location: Lookout Mountain and Sumpter WMUs
- Access Acres: 4,475
- Access Period: August 1 through January 31
- Project Duration: 2017 through 2022
- Council Vote: Yes: 5; No: 0
- Board Vote: Yes: 6; No: 0

This project proposes to pay M.R. King Ranches Inc. \$8,950 (\$2.00 per acre) per year for "Welcome to Hunt" access on 4,475 acres of private land in the Lookout Mountain and Sumpter WMUs. The period of access will run from August 1 through January 31 for a period of five years. The properties offer mule deer, Rocky Mountain elk, pronghorn, bear, cougar, coyote and upland game bird hunting. This project will also improve access to surrounding public lands and the Troy Ranches Access Area to the south.

Similar to Troy Ranches, public hunting access to the MR King Ranch properties is important in the Department's efforts to move the Lookout Mountain elk population closer to the management objective.

MR King Access Area first enrolled in the A&H Program in 2010, with renewals in 2011, and 2014. Due to the scattered nature of MR King Ranch properties, measuring hunter use has proven very difficult. In 2014, Department Staff installed six voluntary survey kiosks at strategic locations throughout the access area. During the 2014, 2015, and 2016 hunting season's staff collected 157 survey cards with the majority of the hunters rating the project more than satisfied. Department staff and the landowner feel the survey cards underreport the true usage based on the number of hunters checked in the field and personal observations.

## #2017-07 New River Aleutian Goose Project

- A&H Funds: \$31,500 for fertilizer (\$15,750/year)
- OHA-Josephine: \$2,000 for fertilizer (\$1,000/year)
- Landowners Contribution: \$73,200 in fertilizer and application cost
- Total Project Cost: \$107,100
- Applicants: Knapp, Kamph, McKenzie, Haga, Azevedo
- Location: Sixes WMU
- Habitat Acres: 1,200 acres fertilized pasture
- Access Acres: 3,540 private, 500 BLM improved access
- Project Period: General waterfowl and late goose seasons
- Project Duration: 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 bird seasons
- Council Vote: Yes: 7: No: 0
- Board Vote: Yes: 6: No: 0

The New River Aleutian Goose project started in 2007 to mitigate for goose damage and provide a quality public goose hunting opportunity on the southern Oregon Coast. A new landowner to the project, Gabe Azevedo, has asked to enroll 100 acres of pasture along the southern end of the project. A&H proposes to reimburse the landowner up to \$15,750/year for two years (\$31,500) to purchase fertilizer for 1,200 acres of their shortgrass pasture. The fertilizer will help the pasture regenerate its productive capacity after heavy foraging by Aleutian Canada Geese. In return, the landowners provide public hunting access to more than 3,500 acres. The Josephine Chapter of Oregon Hunters Association (OHA) is contributing \$2,000 (\$1,000/year) for purchase of fertilizer and the Tioga Chapter of OHA is contributing \$400 (\$200 year) in gift cards for the hunter survey drawing discussed below.

As part of the project, the landowners will open 3,540 acres of private pastureland to hunting during the next two general waterfowl and late goose seasons. The project also provides enhanced access to 500 acres of adjacent BLM New River property. A “By Permission” project, hunters must obtain prior permission from the landowners before accessing the area. Phone reservations are made with the landowners on a first come, first served basis with hunters who make reservation to hunt during a particular week ineligible for the following week. The number of hunters and available days vary by landowner. Knapp and Kamph lands will allow up to six hunters per day on Wednesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays. McKenzie lands will allow ten hunters per day and Haga and Azevedo will allow six hunters per day on Saturdays and Sundays. When large numbers of geese are present, the landowners frequently provide additional hunter access. All lands will be open every day during the late goose season.

To document use of the project, hunters are encouraged to fill out a survey form located at voluntary survey kiosks on each of the properties. To increase participation in the survey, all completed survey cards are entered into a drawing for two \$100 gift cards donated by the Tioga Chapter of OHA each year (four gift cards total). The number of completed survey increased after the incentive program began. During the 2015-2016 season, hunters returned 72 cards reporting 228 birds harvested (including 146 Aleutian Canada Geese) with an average satisfaction rating of 4.5 out of 5. During the 2016-17

season, hunters returned 161 cards reporting 379 birds taken (including 289 Aleutian Canada Geese) with an average satisfaction rating of 4.8 out of 5. Because hunters are not required to complete a survey card, the numbers do not represent the absolute number of hunters participating or total harvest.

### #2017-08 Otley Access Area

- A&H Funds: \$173,440 (\$34,688/year)
- Cooperator Contribution: \$2,500 (\$500/year)
- Total Project Value: \$175,940
- Applicant: William Otley
- Location: Steens WMU
- Access Acres: 15,417
- Project Period: August 1 through March 1
- Project Duration: 2017 through 2022
- Council Vote: Yes: 5; No: 0
- Board Vote: Yes: 6; No: 0

This project would continue to pay William Otley \$34,688 per year (\$2.25 per acre), for five years, to provide “Welcome to Hunt” access to 15,417 acres of private land in the Steens Mountain WMU. The access period will extend from August 1 to March 1 for five years, 2017 through 2022.

Located on the western slope of Steens Mountain in Harney County, this project first joined A&H in 2007. The Otley Access Area offers hunting opportunities for mule deer, pronghorn antelope, elk, and sage-grouse. In addition to the hunting opportunity on the private ground, Moon Hill Road running through the property provides an important north-south access between Diamond to the north and the Steens Mountain Loop Road near Fish Lake Campground. While there is no public easement for use of Moon Hill Road through the ranch, the Otley’s have traditionally kept the road open.

Beginning in 2012, two voluntary survey kiosks on the property collected hunter use data, a third kiosk was installed in 2016 to capture use at an alternate entry/exit point. 507 survey cards were collected over the five-year period with an average satisfaction rating of 4.1 out of 5.

### #2017-09 Juhl Access Area

- A&H Funds: \$20,280 (\$4,056/year)
- Cooperator Contribution: \$2,500 (\$500/year)
- Total Project Value: \$22,780
- Applicant: Jolene Juhl
- Location: Steens Mountain WMU
- Access Acres: 1,690
- Project Period: August 1 through March 10
- Project Duration: 2017 through 2022
- Council Vote: Yes: 5; No: 0
- Board Vote: Yes: 6; No: 0

This project will pay Jolene Juhl \$4,056 per year (\$2.40 per acre) for five years for “Welcome to Hunt” access to 1,690 acres in Harney County. Enrolled in A&H Program since 2012, the property is the western most property of the 6,259 acre Lawen Access Area.

Habitat in the project is a mixture of sloughs, a fork of the Silvies River, hay meadows, and wetlands. Enrolled in the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) Wetland Reserve Program (WRP), the property has undergone extensive wetland habitat work, including construction of dikes and water control structures by Ducks Unlimited, NRCS, and the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge.

Close to Burns, the property receives almost constant use during pheasant season. A majority (N=126) of the 217 surveys collected from 2012-2016 at the Juhl Access Area reported hunting upland game birds, with 113 pheasants harvested. The average hunter satisfaction for the site was 3.8 out of 5. Waterfowl, deer, pronghorn, and coyotes are also hunted on the area.

### #2017-10 Alvord Ranch Access Area

- A&H Funds: \$30,000 (\$10,000/year)
- Bird Stamp Funds: \$12,915 (\$4,305/year)
- Cooperator Contribution: \$10,000 (\$3,334/year)
- Total Project Cost: \$52,915
- Applicant: Tom Davis Livestock Inc.
- Location: Steens Mountain WMU
- Access Acres: 3,532
- Project Period: August 1 through March 1
- Project Duration: 2017 through 2020
- Council Vote: Yes: 5; No: 0
- Board Vote: Yes: 4; No: 2

This project will pay Tom Davis Livestock Inc. \$14,305 per year (\$4,05 per acre) for three years of “Welcome to Hunt” access to 3,532 acres of private ranch land and use of ranch roads. Funding for the project is from A&H (\$30,000 per year, \$2.83 per acre) and Upland Bird Stamp funds (\$12,915 per year, \$1.22 per acre). The applicant is providing at least \$10,000 of in-kind road maintenance and staffing of the hot springs hunter check-in station. The project provides access to mule deer, bighorn sheep, pronghorn, chukar, quail, and predator hunting, as well as breathtaking views of Steens Mountain.

The Alvord Ranch lies between East Steens County Road and the Steens Mountain BLM property, making it extremely difficult to access the east side of Steens Mountain without using ranch roads or passing through the Alvord Ranch. Tom Davis Livestock allows hunters to use nine miles of ranch roads during wet winter months, which the ranch maintains.

In the A&H Program since 2007, the Alvord Ranch and Kueny Ranch were initially part of one A&H grant with Ed Davis, owner of both ranches. In 2009, Paul and Mike Davis took over operations and separated the business into two ranches, but remained funded under one A&H project. In 2011, the Alvord Ranch/Kueny Ranch project was extended for two additional years. In 2014, the projects separated creating the Alvord Ranch Access Area and the Kueny Ranch Access Area; both projects were funded for an additional three years with the assistance of Upland Bird Stamp funds. In recognition of the high value of the area to upland bird hunters, particularly chukar hunters, Upland Bird Stamp funds are again contributing to the Alvord Ranch project.

During the fall of 2016, ranch staff at the Alvord Hot Springs check-in station recorded more than 400 hunter use days of the project. In comparison, over a five year period from 2012-2016, Department staff collected 175 completed surveys. The discrepancy between data collected by a staffed check station, vs voluntary surveys, demonstrates the under-estimate of hunter use of most A&H access areas.

When they applied for renewal, Tom Davis Livestock Inc. requested an increase in the annual payment. After discussions with the A&H Coordinator for the Malheur Region, the proposal requested an increase from the previous \$11,653 annual payment to \$14,305, a \$2,652 per year increase (\$7,956 total increase for the three-year project). The increased payment recognizes maintaining the 9 miles of ranch road used by hunters and the expense of operating the check-station at the hot springs. The Alvord Access Area stretches along approximately 11 miles of the east face of Steens Mtn. The roads opened to the public by this project provide access not only the ranch property, but includes eight open roads through the property to adjacent BLM lands that are otherwise difficult to access.

During the April 10, 2017 A&H Board Meeting in Bandon, Oregon, board members requested additional information on the amount of access to public (BLM) land provided by the project, as well as questions about check-station staffing and road maintenance provided by the ranch. A motion passed to table the project, reconvene, and consider a revised application. The Board considered the revised Alvord Ranch Access Area application during an April 25, 2017 teleconference meeting. Two Board Members were uncomfortable with the increased payment and did not support the revised application. The motion to recommend the project for funding passed on a four to two vote.

## #2017-11 Kueny Ranch Access Area

- A&H Funds: \$58,500 (\$11,700/year)
- Cooperator Contribution: \$2,500 (\$500/year)
- Total Project Cost: \$61,000
- Applicant: Davis Ranches and Farms
- Location: Steens Mountain WMU
- Access Acres: 4,276
- Project Period: August 1 through March 1
- Project Duration: 2017 through 2022
- Council Vote: Yes: 6; No: 0
- Board Vote: Yes: 6; No: 0

This project proposes to pay Davis Ranches and Farms \$11,700 (\$2.00 per acre) a year, for “Welcome to Hunt” access to 5,850 acres of private land in the Steens Mountain WMU. The project provides access to chukar, quail, ground squirrels, mule deer, bighorn sheep, pronghorn, and predators.

Part of the A&H program since 2007, the Kueny Ranch Access Area is located on the east side of Steens Mountain and is characterized by steep rimrock, sagebrush steppe, brushy riparian, and rangeland habitat types. One of the most popular areas in southeast Oregon the project provides access to BLM land that is very difficult or impossible to access from other locations. This property was initially part of the Alvord/Kueny Ranch Access Area agreement as discussed under the Alvord Ranch proposal.

From 2012-2016, hunters returned 175 completed survey cards reporting an average satisfaction rating of 3.3 out of 5.



## 2017-12 Bentz Access Area

- A&H Funds: \$48,105 (\$8,786/year)
- Cooperator Contribution: \$2,500 (\$500/year)
- Total Project Value: \$50,605
- Applicant: Linda Bentz
- Location: Malheur River WMU
- Access Acres: 4,276
- Project Period: August 1 through March 1
- Project Duration: 2017 through 2022
- Council Vote: Yes: 6; No: 0
- Board Vote: Yes: 6; No: 0

This project proposes to continue to pay Linda Bentz \$9,554 (\$2.25 per acre) a year for “Welcome to Hunt” access to 4,276 acres of private land in the Malheur River WMU for five years (2017-2022). Public hunting access to the area will run from August 1 through March 1 and provide opportunities to hunt mule deer, antelope, elk, cougar, coyote, chukar, sage-grouse and quail.

The Bentz Access area is located in the southern portion of the Malheur River WMU in Malheur County, Oregon. The property is composed of mixed conifer forest in the north and sagebrush steppe in the south. Almost completely surrounded by public property, the area receives heavy use from rifle deer hunters, pronghorn antelope hunters, High Desert elk hunters, and coyote hunters.

Due to vandalism and damage from livestock using the kiosks as rubbing posts, it has been extremely difficult to capture good use data on the Bentz Access Area with survey cards. Department staff will implement additional fencing this summer to address livestock damage to the survey kiosks. When reviewing this proposal the Malheur Regional A&H Council noted the area receives heavy use by hunters, and provides good hunting from the public road running through the property.