

Agenda Item Summary

BACKGROUND

Created in 1994 by The Oregon Legislative Assembly, the seven-member Access & Habitat Board (Board) reviews project proposals that improve wildlife habitat and/or enhance public hunting access in Oregon. Project applications submitted by landowners, corporations, organizations, and agencies are initially reviewed by Board-appointed Regional Councils (Councils) established in six geographic regions of the state. The Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission (Commission) must approve projects recommended for funding by the Board.

Funding for Access & Habitat Program (A&H), over \$2.7 million per biennium, is from three primary sources;

- \$4 from each hunting and combination license sold (approximately \$1.7 million per biennium)
- Proceeds from the annual Big Game Auction and Raffle tags (\$1.0 million per biennium)
- Biennial allocation of approximately \$40,000 from the Green Forage and Deer Enhancement and Restoration programs

The A&H dedicated account balance was \$1,108,315 at the end of November 2017. A&H program funds deposited in the dedicated account can be expended only for access and habitat activities. Program spending over the previous two biennia has been approximately \$2 million on projects and \$350,000 on administration. During the 2015-2017 biennium, A&H projects provided hunters access to over 4.5 million acres of private land and improved 13,254 acres of habitat for wildlife.

In 2015 the Department was awarded \$1.56 million of 2014 Farm Bill grant funds. Administrated by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), the Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program (VPA-HIP) provides competitive grants to states to provide public hunting access to private lands and habitat improvement projects located on private lands that provide access to public hunters. The Department has obligated all of the NRCS grant award of \$1,560,122 to twelve projects and salary and services for two Department field coordinators to administrate the Willamette Valley Goose Hunter and Columbia Basin Upland Initiative access projects. Nine projects provide public hunting access to 452,012 acres of private land. Three projects fund wildlife habitat improvement on 4,880 acres of private land and provide public access to 27,275 acres of private land. The VPA-HIP access acreage is included in the 4.5 million A&H acres cited above.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

A&H provides for public involvement at Council and Board meetings. Council and Board meetings are advertised by press release and on the webpage. Meeting materials are posted on the website. Members of the public may review the documents and provide comments. Interested parties may provide public comment during these meetings. The Board most recently met in Salem on January 9, and 24, 2018.

ANALYSIS

The Department and Barnes & Associates Inc., representing Forest Investment Associates (FIA), have requested \$44,628 per year to create the 65,420 acre Coos Mtn. Access Area. The three year, \$133,884 project would provide funds for enhanced Oregon State Police (OSP) patrol of the Access Area (\$73,884) and compensate FIA (\$60,000) for access to 25,722 acres of private land.

<u>Funds Requested</u>	<u>\$133,884 for three years of access</u>
Enhanced Patrol:	\$24,628 per year for three years
Access Payment:	\$20,00 per year for three years
Location:	Tioga Wildlife Management Unit (WMU)
Access Area:	65,420 (30,696 private, 34,724 public)
Access Duration:	July 1, 2018 through June 30, 2021
Cooperators:	Weyerhaeuser, Roseburg Forest Products, BLM, OHA-Tioga Chapter
Board Vote:	Yes: 6; No: 0

The Board unanimously recommended funding the Coos Mtn. Access Area at the January meeting. Should the Commission approve the Board recommendation, a little more than \$225,000 of the A&H 2017-2019 spending allocation will remain for additional Access & Habitat projects.

A representative of Barnes & Associates Inc. approached Department biologists in Charleston about cooperating to mitigate some of the impacts of allowing public use on FIA lands in the Coos Mtn. area. The result is the proposed Coos Mtn. Access Area, a mix of private and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) timbered lands southeast of Coos Bay with a shared network of roads.

Barnes & Associates Inc. manages the majority, 25,722 acres (80%), of the private land within the proposed Access Area. Other cooperators, Weyerhaeuser Co. and Roseburg Forest Products, control the remaining private land, 4,974 acres, participating in the Access Area. The BLM owns property in the Access Area; 17,724 acres accessible by public roads, and 17,000 acres accessible only by use of private property/roads.

As part of the agreement A&H will fund OSP to provide additional patrol of the Access Area. OSP will enforce Access Area Use Regulations which include; road closures, no overnight use of private lands, and no fires on private lands. In addition to the enhanced patrol, A&H funds will compensate FIA for access to their lands. The \$20,000 annual payment will cover some of the costs associated from allowing public access, including; wear to roads, repair/replacement of fences/gates, clean-up of illegal dump sites, and remediating damage to sensitive areas from unauthorized motor vehicle use.

The Tioga WMU has the largest elk population management objective in the state (8,000), allowing for controlled centerfire rifle elk hunts with 3,000

combined bull tags. The Tioga WMU also offers controlled bull hunts for archery and muzzleloader hunters, in addition to general archery elk, general archery and centerfire deer seasons, and is popular with spring bear hunters.

The Southwest Regional Council and the A&H Board unanimously recommended the Coos Mtn. Access Area for Commission approval.

OPTIONS

Option 1. Approve A&H Board recommended project.

Option 2. Reject A&H Board recommended project.

**STAFF
RECOMMENDATION**

Approve the Coos Mtn. Access Area project as recommended by the A&H Board.

DRAFT MOTION	I move to approve the Coos Mtn. Access Area as recommended by the Access and Habitat Board.
EFFECTIVE DATE	March 16, 2018

Item 2	A&H Habitat Small Grants Program
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ANALYSIS

Each biennium the A&H Program receives an allocation of approximately \$40,000 from the Green Forage and Deer Enhancement and Restoration (DEAR) programs. The Access & Habitat Board recommends the Commission approve using these Green Forage and DEAR funds for a wildlife habitat Small Grant Program. The 2017-2019 A&H biennial allocation is \$19,187 from Green Forage and \$18,179 from DEAR, a total of \$37,366. Evenly split, each of the six A&H Regions will receive \$6,225 in funds for the 2017-2019 biennium. At the start of subsequent biennia the A&H allocation of Green Forage and DEAR funds will be evenly distributed to the six A&H Regions.

Each Regional Coordinator will use the funds on projects to improve wildlife habitat, the funds will not be used for access payments. Projects funded by the small grant program must have 25% non-Department matching funds, matching funds may include; volunteer labor, donated materials, services and equipment time, or cash. The matching requirement will stimulate cooperation with sporting groups and other grant programs, as well as, extend the funds through leverage. Grant funds can be used for purchase of durable goods only if the items are a permanent part of the habitat project, examples include water troughs, fencing, and informational signs. Grant funds may be used for match with other habitat grants, potential matching grants include, Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, and Oregon Heritage Foundation small grants.

Thirty days post project completion a project report describing; the activity funded, matching funds, project partners, and photos of the project will be submitted to the statewide A&H coordinator. Project reports will be presented to the Board at quarterly meetings and the Commission will be briefed at the beginning of each biennium on the previous biennium's Small Grant Program accomplishments.

OPTIONS

- Option 1. Approve A&H Board recommended Small Grant Program.
- Option 2. Reject A&H Board recommended Small Grant Program.

**STAFF
RECOMMENDATION**

Approve the Small Grant Program as recommended by the A&H Board.

DRAFT MOTION	I move to approve the Habitat Small Grant program as recommended by the Access & Habitat Board.
EFFECTIVE DATE:	March 16, 2018

ANALYSIS

The Chair of the Access & Habitat Board, Craig Ely, completed his first 4 year term March 7, 2018 (first as a landowner representative and then as the Board Chair in December 2016). Volunteers are eligible to serve two consecutive terms. When a Board Member completes a term on the Board the position advertised and applications accepted. From January 4, 2018 through January 26, 2018 the Department received 3 applications for the vacancy.

Applicants were asked to provide information about their experience and background relative to the following criteria:

- Breadth of experience in agriculture, forest industries, hunting
- Experience with fish and wildlife resource management issues
- Involvement in agriculture, forest industry and sporting groups
- Leadership and experience on or with boards and commissions
- Experience working with and/or representing the public
- Ability/interest in working collaboratively with others
- Participation in the A&H Program
- Ability to foster positive relations between landowners and hunters

After review of the applications, we are recommending Craig Ely be appointed to a second four year term as Chair of the Access and Habitat Board, due to his breadth of experience, leadership, and qualities he brings to the Board.

Listed below in alphabetical order are brief summaries of the three applicants. The full applications are in Attachment 5.

- **Name:** Craig Ely
- **Location:** La Grande
- **Occupation:** Retired ODFW

First appointed to the Board in March 2014, Craig was appointed for the remainder of his first term as the Chair of the Board in December 2016. An avid hunter and angler, Craig owns a 166-acre farm on critical big game winter range providing him with a unique perspective on wildlife related issues landowners face from a professional and personal level.

Craig actively participates in Board meetings and field trips, consistently providing leadership during discussions and is not afraid to ask difficult questions when evaluating project proposals. Craig helped establish one of the first A&H Advisory Councils and served as Chair of the NE Region Council for two years before he was appointed to the Board. Currently serving on the board of the Union/Wallowa OHA Chapter, and the Starkey Research Forest Animal Welfare Committee, Craig has years of experience with wildlife management and habitat work. He brings to the Board his experience as the NE Regional Supervisor for ODFW as well as serving on

the Grande Ronde Model Watershed Council, Blue Mountain Habitat Restoration Council, and in the 2000's was instrumental in the creation of an advisory committee that developed the Wolf Conservation Plan.

- **Name:** William Freeland
- **Location:** Eagle Point
- **Occupation:** Retired BLM

William Freeland's 38 year career with the Federal government as the former Chief of Resources for the Medford District of Bureau of Land Management, Park Planner for the Olympic National Park and other positions have provided extensive leadership experience in natural resources and working with the public. William helped to initiate the Wildlife Program at the Bonneville Power Administration, as well as representing the government on the Columbia River Estuary Study Tasks Force. A trained facilitator, William utilized his skills during public involvement meetings on the Yucca Mountain Project (spent nuclear fuel storage facility) and during meetings with Native American Tribes when working on the master plan for Olympic National Park.

William also volunteered his time outside of work as a member of the Citizen's Park Board for the Sequim, Washington, and served on the Eagle Point Parks and Recreation Commission, including 5 years as the Chair.

- **Name:** William Palmer
- **Location:** Portland
- **Occupation:** Outdoor Industry Manager

With over 20 years of management and operations experience in the outdoor industry, William has experience with boards having participated in Portland's Downtown Retail Council and Downtown Clean and Safe District. William's connection to the outdoor industry and his management experience provide him with the skills to work collaboratively on access and habitat issues.

William, an avid fly fisher and bird hunter, spent his summers as a youth adventuring around the state gaining appreciation of the state's wild places. He is a member of Trout Unlimited, Ducks Unlimited, and Pheasants Forever. William also supports the Nature Conservancy and the Western Rivers Conservancy.

DRAFT MOTION	I move to appoint Craig Ely to a second four-year term as Chair of the Access & Habitat Board.
EFFECTIVE DATE:	March 16, 2018