



Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission  
January 18, 2019

## EAST REGION

Bruce Eddy, Region Manager

### Invasive Grass Control

The John Day Wildlife Habitat Program is working with Wilbur-Ellis on how to use the granular herbicide Imazapic to suppress cheat grass, medusahead rye, and Ventenata. We hope to develop a cost effective method to rehabilitate range from invasive annual grasses back into a perennial bunch grass community.



For decades, non-native annual grasses invaded and, eventually, dominated many native perennial bunch grass communities across the west. Maintaining native grass habitats is important for wintering mule deer, elk, sage grouse, and sage sparrows. Unfortunately, there has not been a cost effective method for reversing the invasion at a meaningful scale.

John Day staff started collaborating with Wilbur-Ellis and others on the use of Imazapic for range rehabilitation in 2012. To reduce the cost of using this herbicide, ground rather than aerial application has been the focus of our efforts. If properly applied, granular Imazapic will severely depress invasive annual grasses while leaving established perennial grasses.

Bridge Creek Wildlife Area plots testing the use of granular Imazapic in 2012 successfully eliminated

invasive grasses. We expanded the treatment to a 275-acre area at Bridge Creek in 2017. Monitoring in 2018 found invasive grasses suppressed while native perennial grasses responded well and were expanding. We over-seeded the treatment area with perennial grass to accelerate restoration in fall 2018. Future monitoring will evaluate the success of this approach.

Given our past success, more landscape level treatments will occur in the coming years to help refine our technique. If these methods are successful, Natural Resources Conservation Service may eventually adopt them as a standard treatment.

### Cold Springs Elk Damage

The department is cooperating with private landowners, hunting organizations, and the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to address chronic and severe elk damage occurring on irrigated row crops adjacent to Cold Springs National Wildlife Refuge (NWR). Elk damage around NWR began in the early 1990s when a small group of elk (15 to 20) moved there. At the time, The USFWS did not allow big game hunting on the refuge. Neighboring landowners also saw the elk as a novelty and tolerated them because they did not seem to be a problem. In a short time, however, the elk herd grew and began to damage high value crops in the area. Approximately 450 reside in the Cold Springs Area now.

In response, landowners and the department began trying to address the problem. While a number of tools have been used, our efforts have been largely unsuccessful. Recently we have focused on removing elk from the area using hunting and kill permits. Focused general seasons, controlled hunts, emergency hunters, and elk damage tags were used initially. Unfortunately, elk have responded to increased hunting by moving to other areas and feeding nocturnally to avoid hunters.



Kill permits are being used to provide additional pressure. The Legislature provided an appropriation of \$50,000 in 2018 to help with the removal of elk from the area using kill permits. Community Action Program East Central Oregon, a local affiliate of the Oregon Food Bank, uses a portion of this appropriation for meat processing.

This effort is expected to continue through the winter to help resolve this problem.

### **Improved Angler Access**

The LA Grande and Wallowa Fish Districts are improving access for anglers across Union, Baker, and Wallowa counties. Previously, only one ADA compliant facility existed in the three counties. This year two projects were completed in Union County and new facilities will be popping up in Baker and Wallowa Counties over the next two years.

This year we installed ADA accessible angling platforms with adjoining parking spaces and paths at Peach Pond on Ladd Marsh Wildlife Area and Roulette Pond, near the town of Elgin. These improvements resulted from a survey of site users on improvements that would make for a better experience.

These ponds are often the site of popular free family friendly fishing events each June. A recent tag-reward study indicated exploitation rates of stocked legal and trophy rainbow trout in these ponds can exceed 80%.

Facility improvement funding was a combination Sportfish Restoration and Restoration and Enhancement funds.



The local District staff is planning additional upgrades at other ponds in Baker and Wallowa counties in the next few years. Improvements will include angling platforms, parking spaces and lot improvements, paths and trails, restrooms, and garbage facilities.

### **WEST REGION**

Bernadette Graham- Hudson, Region Manager

#### **Sauvie Island Waterfowl Hunting Social Media**

Sauvie Island Wildlife Area biologist Kasey Scrivens wanted a way to reach hunters interested in Sauvie Island waterfowl hunting. In 2017, she began creating Facebook videos giving hunters needed information on current conditions, harvest numbers and forecasts, descriptions of various aspects of the wildlife area and habitat types.

Scrivens also wanted to open the door for people interested in hunting Sauvie Island but did not know the complicated access process. She explained this, the blind reservation draw system, how to hunt both the east and west sides, and more. She also promoted the Island's 'turn in trash to win a hat' program.

The videos continued again this year and are very popular with Portland-area hunters. This has been a great way to reach both new and seasoned Sauvie Island waterfowl hunters.

#### **Coos River Basin STEP Hatcheries Host Student Learning Events**

Salmon and Trout Enhancement Program (STEP) hatcheries in the Coos River Basin hosted over three hundred fifth grade and high school students

during this the 2018 fall salmon spawning season. Events were held at Noble Creek and Morgan Creek hatcheries.

During these events, students have the opportunity to help with every aspect of the salmon spawning process while being guided and helped by over thirty adult volunteers. Classes are separated into five smaller groups and each is assigned a station where they learn to net fish, identify male and female Chinook salmon, collect eggs, measure total length of salmon, or scan carcasses for coded wire tags. STEP biologist Antonio Salgado teaches the student about the role hatcheries and habitat play with fisheries, the salmon life cycle, and the different species of salmon present in the Pacific Northwest.



Spawning events lasts about two hours and groups are rotated about every 20 minutes to ensure students can learn each step involved in spawning salmon. At the end of the event, students are encouraged to share what they learned as well as identify their favorite station.

These STEP hatcheries have reared fall Chinook salmon since the late 1980s and since then, thousands of students have participated in spawning, fin marking, and other events. With ODFW STEP biologists' oversight, the South Coast Anglers STEP group manages Morgan

Creek Hatchery and the Coos River STEP group manages Noble Creek Hatchery.



### **Springfield Fish Staff Negotiate Water Releases**

In mid-November, Jeff Ziller, Springfield District Fish Biologist, assisted Greg Taylor, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) fish biologist in working with USACE reservoir management to keep adequate water in the Middle Fork Willamette River below Dexter Dam.

USACE reservoir management team proposed dropping the flow from 1,550 to 1,000 cfs in the Middle Fork to retain power generation in case appreciable rainfall is lacking in December. Greg was able to advise the team about potential effects low flow would have on aquatic organisms in the basin (i.e. drying up several side channels including the Springfield Millrace causing stress, stranding, and increased predation) and some alternatives they might consider.

The USACE team agreed to maintain 1,500 cfs in the river by using additional water in Hills Creek Reservoir in the near term.

### **Columbia River Avian Predation Study**

There is promising news for a major Columbia River avian predation study. In a mid-December ad hoc meeting, ODFW learned that Bonneville Power Administration (BPA), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and the Priest Rapids Coordinating Committee might be considering funding for several crucial analyses that have been omitted by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) in their proposed avian predation synthesis report. The analyses would include system-wide modeling of avian predation impacts on adult salmon returns across a 20-year period.

The interest follows a recent move by ODFW to fund a retrospective analysis on predation impacts for alternative colony sites in the Columbia River estuary, which has been another key gap in the USACE proposed report.

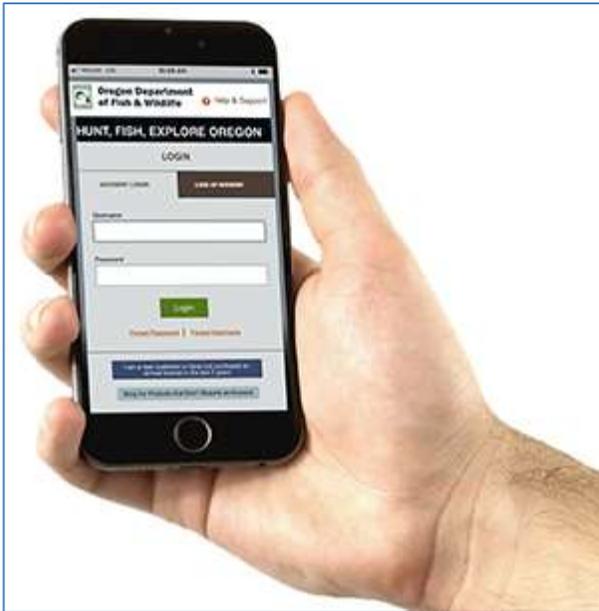
Avian predation biologist, James Lawonn, submitted contracting paperwork for retrospective analyses of cormorant predation in the Columbia River estuary. The work is expected to clarify the likely impact of the growing Astoria-Megler Bridge cormorant colony on out-migrating salmonids.

## INFORMATION AND EDUCATION

Roger Fuhrman, Administrator

### Electronic License System Launches

ODFW's new electronic license system (ELS) launched December 1, 2018 with Director Curt Melcher buying the first license online. I&E coordinated the effort to inform hunters and anglers about the new licensing system and the associated smartphone app. Web, email, social media, video, news releases and broadcast media interviews helped deliver messages about how and why to use the new system. ELS information is prominent in the just-released 2019 regulations for big game and angling.



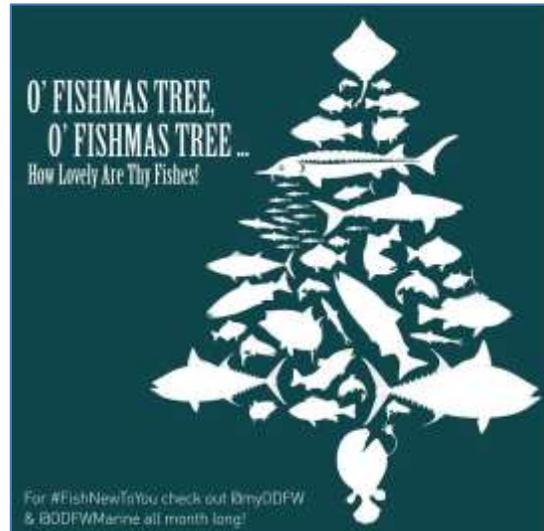
Facebook videos feature ODFW staff enrolling in the system and using the app. Noted outdoor author, speaker and TV host, Scott Haugen contributed “how-to” videos for MyODFW.com.

Most customer feedback has been positive, with a few people encountering technical problems, especially with older phones. ODFW is promoting the new system and reminding customers that their favorite point of sale agent or ODFW office can sell them a license just like before.

As the new year progresses, outreach efforts will continue to focus on helping people become more comfortable with enrolling in ELS and using the app.

### #25DaysOfFishmas II

Like the sequel to a favorite holiday movie, ODFW's #25DaysOfFishmas is back on social media. For the first 25 days of December, the Instagram feed highlights many of Oregon's unique fish species through the eyes of those who fish for them, photograph them, and study them.



The series features little known native fish, like the Pacific brook lamprey and the Borax chub and the Oregon chub, the first fish delisted from the federal Endangered Species Act list. One entire week focuses on suckers, the “most misunderstood native fish in Oregon waters.” suckers. The series tries to counter the misconception that the Bridgelip, Tahoe, Lost River, and other suckers are trash fish or feed on the eggs of trout and other species. They do not and they fill an important role in river and lake ecosystems. Some, like the Warner and Modoc suckers, are remnants of inhabitants of huge ice age lakes that once covered Oregon's desert country. Many sucker species are now threatened or endangered due to loss of habitat, drought, and invasive species.

Another week highlights “microfishing”. Anglers use specialized hooks and bait to intentionally target fish that are less than six inches long. One commenter remarked that microfishing could be a good excuse when you do not catch any big fish.



*Prickly Sculpin caught and released from the Willamette River.*

The series is a fun, interesting way to share information about Oregon’s native fish. Many are not targeted by recreational fishing, yet are still important to the ecosystem.



*A “fisbeye” lens view of a freshwater reef in the Middle Fork Willamette River with native redbreasted sunfish and nonnative smallmouth bass.*

Sturgeon round out the series, with a guest appearance by Oregon’s own Herman the Sturgeon. Herman was displayed for years at the Oregon State Fair and wraps up on Christmas Day wishing everyone a very, merry Fishmas.

## OCEAN SALMON AND COLUMBIA RIVER PROGRAM

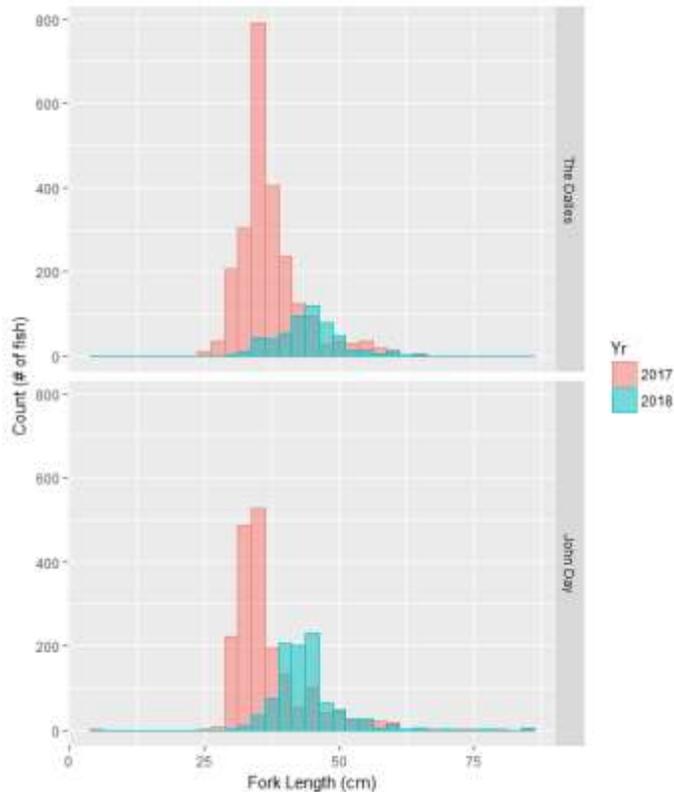
Tucker Jones, Ocean Salmon and Columbia River Program Manager (OSCRP)

### OSCRP’s “Zone 6” Recreational Creel Survey illuminates Walleye fishery!

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife has been sampling the recreational fisheries in the impounded mainstem Columbia River upstream of Bonneville Dam to the Oregon/Washington state line (aka, “Zone 6”) for the last three years. The survey focuses on salmon, steelhead, and white sturgeon; however, it also provides useful insight into other sport fisheries, particularly the recreational walleye fishery.

The survey encompasses the entire impounded lower Columbia River mainstem, and includes both sides of the river. The Zone 6 Fishery is broken into four reaches separated by federal hydropower dams with each reach representing its own distinct sampling unit. Since 2017, we have been sampling the fishery using an access-access design. Each day creel clerks collect effort and catch data via angler interviews at a specific launch or bank angling location. Creel effort by location is approximately proportional to angler effort.

Data from 2018 supports findings presented in our 2017 Field Report that anglers targeting walleye, particularly in The Dalles and John Day pools, expend substantial effort. Since April 1, when the creel survey began annually, anglers have taken an estimated 9,300 and 12,600 walleye trips in The Dalles and John Day pools, respectively. Walleye catches in 2018 continue to be high though not matching the pace of 2017. During 2018, anglers harvested ~14,300 and ~18,100 walleye in The Dalles and John Day pools, respectively. This totals ~32,000 walleye harvested across both pools since April of 2018. These estimates of effort and catch represent a conservative view of the fishery since a productive late-winter/early spring fishery occurs prior to the start of our creel survey for anyone hardy enough to brave the weather.



Walleye length data taken from harvested fish indicates that the majority of these fish come from a strong 2015-year class, which is recruiting, to the fishery. The figure above shows fish length distributions for The Dalles and John Day Reservoirs for 2017 and 2018. The super-imposed lines showing the “2015 year class in harvest samples. In both 2017 and 2018, the bulk of the fish we sampled were clustered around approximately ages 2+ or 3+, respectively. This confirms preliminary results from 2017 suggesting a strong 2015 age class.

Our monitoring efforts have demonstrated the substantial value of the “Zone 6” Recreational Creel to provide insight into fisheries dynamics beyond salmon and steelhead fisheries.

### OREGON STATE POLICE (OSP)

Captain Jeff Samuels, Fish & Wildlife Division

OSP Fish and Wildlife Troopers from Newport responded to a call from a US Forest Service (USFS) Law Enforcement Officer in the Waldport area. The USFS Officer contacted a group of three subjects with two bull elk. The USFS Officer noticed one bull had not been tagged and contacted OSP Dispatch. Upon contact, the Troopers began interviewing the three subjects, which revealed that one of the successful subjects had left to go to work. Troopers interviewed the

person at work and discovered the subject had not been present on the day’s hunt. The remaining three subjects on scene were interviewed separately and the full story came to light. Two subjects were hunting in the area that morning. One of the subjects shot a spike bull elk with a rifle while the other subject shot at and hit a 3pt. bull elk. The subject who had just killed the spike elk then took the other subject’s rifle and used it to shoot and kill the 3pt. bull elk. The subject who shot the spike and eventually killed the 3pt. did not possess a rifle elk tag and had archery hunted earlier in the year. The subjects obtained a valid elk tag from another person to tag the spike elk and a different person brought the tag to the subjects. The subject who shot the spike elk and eventually killed the 3pt. was cited for *Unlawful Take/Possession of Bull Elk, Hunting Closed Season, and Lending/Borrowing a Big Game Tag*. The other subject was cited for *Aiding/Counseling in a Wildlife Offense*. The person who brought the elk tag to the hunters was cited for *Aiding/Counseling in a Wildlife Offense* and the person who provided the tag for the spike elk and who was not present on the hunt was warned for *Lending/Borrowing a Big Game Tag*. The spike bull elk and two rifles were seized as evidence.

Our Klamath Falls Fish and Wildlife Sergeant contacted the Premium Deer Tag holder in the Fort Rock Unit while conducting Winter Range Patrol. The hunter was identified as Retired OSP Lieutenant Dudley Nelson. (Retired in 1993). Mr. Nelson was hunting with his son, and advised he had regrettably passed on a large three-point buck seen earlier in the season. The following morning Mr. Nelson and his son were able to locate the buck and he filled his tag with a trophy of a lifetime.



Our La Grande Fish and Wildlife Sergeant received a complaint of a damage tag holder hunting and killing a cow elk in an area outside the allotted area for the tag he was issued. The Sergeant made contact with the individual and found the individual outside the area restrictions for the damage tag he was issued. The individual was cited for *Unlawful Take of Cow Elk-No Valid Tag* and the cow elk carcass was seized.

### **CONSERVATION PROGRAM**

Andrea Hanson, Oregon Conservation Strategy Coordinator

#### **Gale Achterman Wildlife Area invasive plant removal**

Invasive plant removal at Gale Achterman Wildlife Area concluded for this year. Most of the upper half of the 309-acre island has had initial treatments made on thick stands of Ludwigia, reed canary grass and blackberry. Treatments resume over the next two years preparing for revegetation with native riparian trees and shrubs.

Below are before and after photos of an interior section of forest that was completely encroached by reed canary grass and blackberry. This will be planted in the future with native species.



#### **Harborton Frog Shuffle**

Staff issued a Wildlife Capture, Holding, Transport, and Relocation (CHTR) permit to the Sauvie Island Habitat Partnership to facilitate the “Harborton Frog Shuffle Project” for the 2018-19 amphibian-breeding season.



The permit allows trained citizen volunteers to capture and transport Northern red-legged frogs moving between foraging/over-wintering habitats in Forest Park and breeding habitat at Harborton wetlands. Many movement hazards exist including Highway 30, several side roads, and railroad tracks. This effort has gotten good press coverage in the past. Northern red-legged frogs are an Oregon Conservation Strategy Species in four of the nine ecoregions.

#### **New Information on Ladd Marsh Wildlife Area’s Greater Sandhill Crane Population**

Ladd Marsh Wildlife Area biologist Cathy Nowak has discovered where some of the area’s small group of nesting greater Sandhill cranes winter, and recently released a peer-reviewed Brief Communication on the new data. Currently, cranes are managed as discrete populations based on several wintering areas in the western U.S. Each population has its own management plan and some are hunted, which could impact Oregon’s populations.

Nowak began color banding the birds in 2007, but was not receiving reports of their wintering

location. With grants secured by the Friends of Ladd Marsh and a partnership with Texas Tech University, Nowak began trapping and using Platform Transmitter Terminals (PTTs) on the cranes in 2015. These are small satellite transmitters on leg bands that record the cranes' GPS locations and upload the data. To date, 11 adult cranes were outfitted with PTTs; five of those are currently transmitting data.



**END OF FIELD REPORTS FOR  
January 18, 2019**

Biologists thought the small Ladd Marsh population was discrete and wintered in the same area. However, the satellite data shows seven cranes wintered in California's Central Valley and one in the Lower Colorado River Valley of southwest Arizona and southern California, which means the populations, are mixing. More research is needed to determine how these cranes fit into the larger picture of crane population delineation and management in the west.

Greater Sandhill cranes are Oregon Conservation Strategy Species and the Conservation Program contributed funds to purchase one PTT for 2019 trapping efforts. Grants secured by Friends of Ladd Marsh along with PR funds purchased an additional two. Texas Tech University graduate students and Nowak's coauthor on the paper will again travel to La Grande this spring to attempt capture and transmitter attachment on three cranes.