Summary of Projects Recommended for Access & Habitat Funding

The Access and Habitat (A&H) Board met January 14, 2020 in Salem and April 7, 2020 via teleconference to review projects recommended for funding by A&H Regional Councils (Councils). A project must receive at least four supporting votes from the Board to be recommended for funding. 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 five projects:

**2019-08 Willamette Private Lands Enforcement Project**

- A&H Funds: $75,628
- Cost Per Acre: ~$0.16/year
- Cooperator Funds: $59,468
- Total Project Cost: $135,095
- Applicant: ODFW
- Location: Benton, Lane, Lincoln, Linn, Polk, Marion, and Yamhill Counties
- Access Acres: 472,423 private on a “Welcome to Hunt” basis
- Access Duration: 1 Year: March 2020 - April 2021
- Cooperators: Avery Family Forest, Freres Timber Inc., Seneca Jones, Starker Forests, Weyerhaeuser Company, Cascade Timber
- Council Vote: Yes: 4; No: 0
- Board Vote: Yes: 6; No: 0

This is a continuation of a project started in 1995. The project will provide law enforcement via Oregon State Police Troopers to allow landowners to continue to allow access to their lands by hunters during hunting seasons.

The project area includes approximately 472,423 acres of large industrial private forestland and increased access to over 2.9 million acres of public land in the northwest portion of Oregon. These timberlands provide an area where many of Oregon’s hunters want to go, near where most of them live. The project originated to combat rampant vandalism, garbage dumping, illegal drug activity, in addition to regulating hunters. The issues above resulted in gates being installed and locked, preventing access to those areas and many public lands by hunters. Increased law enforcement and education of the public to address access related issues has led to many of those gates remaining open during the hunting seasons.

Timber companies and other landowners benefit from hunters harvesting big game to control their population and address wildlife related damage to tree plantations. However, access can increase the vulnerability of elk and deer to illegal take. As a result, law enforcement is crucial to reducing problems for landowners and aids deer and elk management by providing an enforcement presence.
2019-09 Weyerhaeuser Access Project

- A&H Funds: $414,780, ($82,956 per year)
- Cost per Acre: $0.90 per year
- Cooperator Funds: $1,025,000 ($205,000 per year)
- Total Project Cost: $1,439,780 ($287,956 per year)
- Applicant: Weyerhaeuser Company
- Location: Trask, Stott Mt., Alsea, and Siuslaw Wildlife Management Units
- Access Acres: 92,173 on a “Welcome to Hunt” basis
- Project Duration: August 2020-July 2025
- Council Vote Yes: 4; No: 0
- Board Vote: Yes: 5; No: 0

The Weyerhaeuser Access Project will provide public recreational access to approximately 92,173 acres of privately-owned commercial timberlands for a period of five years. The project provides public access utilizing a combination of motorized and walk-in use. The project increases public access at lower Industrial Fire Precaution Levels (IFPL). Weyerhaeuser historically provided no access to these lands until the close of fire season, as declared by Oregon Department of Forestry. Under this agreement, motorized access will be allowed during IFPL 1 and 2, walk-in access during IFPL 3, and closed to all access during IFPL 4. This change is likely to benefit archers, bear, cougar and upland game bird hunters. The Project would provide motorized access to the Valley of the Giants and the Siletz Gorge which is hugely popular with anglers.

Additionally, the Weyerhaeuser Access Project will provide consistent rules and timing of recreational access with the Hancock Access Area that is also part of the Stott Mtn/North Alsea Travel Management Area. Consistent rules and open dates will reduce confusion caused by Hancock Access Area lands rules differing from the rest of the TMA.

Finally, the Weyerhaeuser Access Project maintains 92,173 acres and another ~94,881 acres in other A&H projects, open to the public. This project preserves recreational opportunities for the public free of a fee such as for a Weyerhaeuser recreation permit or lease.
Weyerhaeuser Access Project Map
2020-01 North Coast Travel Management Area

Note: The funding proposal is for the first year only of the project which was approved for five years. Oregon State Police is discontinuing the retired trooper program and will utilize regular duty Troopers for enforcement for the 2020 hunting season. Alternatives for future law enforcement for the project are being investigated. The A&H Board will return to the Commission at a later date with a funding proposal for the remainder of the project duration.

- A&H Funds: $191,240 (year one only)
- Cost per Acre: $0.40 per year for private lands
- Cooperator Funds: $94,300 (year one only)
- Total Project Cost: $285,540 (year one only)
- Applicant: David Nuzum, ODFW, on behalf of cooperating landowners
- Location: Saddle Mountain, Scappoose, Wilson, and Trask Wildlife Management Units
- Access Acres: 473,539 private, 1.2 million acres total including public lands on a “Welcome to Hunt” basis
- Project Duration: August 2020-December 2024
- Council Vote Yes: 4; No: 0; Abstain: 1
- Board Vote: Yes: 6; No: 0

The North Coast Travel Management Area project has existed in various forms since 1997. This project will maintain and improve public access to private and public timberlands during big game hunting seasons by continuing funding for a Travel Management Area program on the North Coast. Access and Habitat funds will be used by Oregon State Police to provide dedicated law enforcement on the Travel Management Area for one year. The project provides access to over 1.2 million acres of land (473,539 private) in close proximity to the major urban centers of the state.

The increased law enforcement presence and associated OARs have allowed landowners to address the issues they face when opening their lands to the public. Reactions by both cooperating landowners and recreationists have been overwhelmingly positive. The Regional Council and Board approved the project unanimously with one Council member abstaining because they own property within the TMA.

Public use of the Access Area has been monitored in recent years by traffic counters located at representative entry points in the four units. On average, 37% of hunter days in the four units are spent on Cooperator lands. Cooperators lands in the four units receive an estimated 40,000-53,000 hunter days per year. These numbers are likely conservative as traffic counters do not capture all hunters.

Timber companies and other landowners benefit from hunters harvesting big game to control their population and address wildlife related damage to tree plantations. However, access can increase the vulnerability of elk and deer to illegal take. As a result, law enforcement is crucial to reducing problems for landowners and aids deer and elk management by providing an enforcement presence.
North Coast TMA Project Map, North Portion
The Access and Habitat Board has assisted in funding this program since 1997. This project will provide law enforcement funding for a Sheriff Deputy to patrol private timberlands during general deer and elk rifle seasons as well as other general hunting seasons. The project encompasses approximately 389,500 acres of private forest land and approximately 121,300 acres of public land (total acres: 510,800). Access to the majority of these lands is controlled by the applicants.

The Forest Deputy is a full-time position with the Linn County Sheriff’s Office (LCSO). The Linn Forest Protective Association (LFPA) Forest Deputy Program Participants under contract with the LCSO agree to cover the Deputy’s salary and the LCSO agrees to pay all benefits (Health, PERS etc.) and material related expenses (patrol vehicle, uniforms, support materials etc.). The A&H funds will cover 11% of the Deputy’s salary and benefit costs, leaving approximately 66% for the Program Participants to fund individually. The remaining 23% of the deputy’s cost is funded by the LCSO.

The Budget developed for this grant application reflects costs that have been documented by LFPA landowners and the LCSO over the history of the Forest Deputy Program. It also includes LCSO projections for increases in the Deputy’s salary and benefits over the next five years.

The program continues to be very successful in fulfilling the objective of keeping forest lands in Linn County accessible to hunters during Oregon’s general deer and elk rifle (Any Legal Weapon) seasons. The year-round law enforcement presence has greatly reduced the amount of illegal activity. This program provides hunters with more options on where to hunt within this 510,800 acre landscape while allowing landowners to feel more comfortable about the risks involved with providing access to the public. Without this year-round enforcement coverage, many of the lands now made available for hunting access would be closed during hunting seasons.
This project is a continuation of a series of habitat projects started in 2010 to improve habitat for mule deer while provided hunting by permission access. The project proposes to:

- Cut 1,224 acres of juniper (800 acres with A&H Open Fields funds) at a cost of $122/acre to improve mule deer and elk winter range condition and continue to restore hydrologic function to the ecosystem.
- Treat 550 acres of weeds (primarily thistle and knapweed) with herbicides to control spread of invasive plants and reduce impacts to native plant species.
- Burn ~700 acres of past juniper cuttings to continue the prescribed burn initiated in 2019 with the prior Open Fields grant to reduce fire danger and improve big game habitat.
- Allow up to 110 hunters (330 hunter days) annually to hunt on property with "By Permission Access" for three years (2020, 2021, and 2022).

The project area is in central Oregon shrub-steppe winter range habitat at the edge of higher elevation dry pine forest. The shrub habitat condition has been altered and degraded in this area by encroaching Phase II and III western juniper woodlands. The juniper stands average 50 to 200 stems per acre with understory vegetation consisting of bunchgrass, sagebrush, bitterbrush, and rabbit brush. As these junipers expand and increase in density, important mule deer, elk, and pronghorn forage will be reduced, eventually leading to shrub and grass communities being replaced with late-seral juniper woodlands. The Department and other natural resource agencies have identified juniper removal as a priority habitat treatment throughout its range.

Aspen Valley Ranch is located within the Department's Maury/S. Ochoco/W. Silvies Mule Deer Initiative area. This program is using state, federal, and private funds to remove juniper on parts of Aspen Valley Ranch as well as surrounding lands, and will continue these efforts into the future. The Regional Council approved the project unanimously. The Board vote was five yes, one no. The Board member who voted no did so as he would like more information on the total amount of funding that has been spent on this land over the last 8 years from various sources, and views the overall cost of the project as high for the amount of access provided.
Aspen Valley Ranch Habitat Project Map