



AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

Created in 1993 by the Oregon Legislative Assembly, the seven-member Access & Habitat (A&H) State 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 established in five geographic regions of the state. Regional Councils forward proposals to the Board with recommendations to approve or deny projects. The Board provides the next level of project review and then forwards proposals to the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission for final consideration and approval to expend A&H Program funds.

Funding for the A&H Program, ~ \$3.1 million per biennium, is from three primary sources;

- \$4 from each hunting and combination license sold (approximately \$1.4 million per biennium)
- Proceeds from the annual Big Game Auction and Raffle tags (approximately \$1.5 million per biennium)
- Biennial allocation of approximately \$90,000 from the Green Forage and Deer Enhancement and Restoration programs

The A&H Program dedicated account balance was \$1,606,929 at the end of October 2021. A&H Program funds deposited in the dedicated account can be expended only for Program activities. As of December 8, 2021, contracted A&H projects this biennium provide hunters with access to over 3 million acres of private land and have improved over 18,000 acres of habitat for wildlife.

ISSUE 1

Accurately reflect the Heppner Regulated Hunt Area description in the Special Area rules.

BACKGROUND

The Heppner Regulated Hunt Area (RHA) has been in existence for 54 years providing “Welcome to Hunt” access to select private lands in the Fossil and Heppner Wildlife Management Units through agreements with cooperating landowners. The RHA is currently in the first year of a five-year A&H agreement. Cooperating landowners receive an annual payment of \$2.40 per acre for enrolled property. Recently, a landowner in the RHA sold a large portion of their property that is currently included in the RHA. The new landowner does not want to continue participation in the RHA beyond the close of the current upland game bird hunting seasons.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The draft rules were posted on the Oregon Transparency website and included with the Commission meeting materials on our website. The A&H Board was briefed on the land sale impacts to the RHA.

ANALYSIS

A portion of the land enrolled in the Heppner RHA has sold and the new landowner does not wish to participate in the RHA after the close of the current upland game bird hunting seasons. This requires removing the recently sold property from the RHA. Additionally, some parcels owned by cooperating landowners need to be removed as they will become “landlocked” with no opportunity for public access. As a result, the size of the RHA will be reduced in size from approximately 63 mi² to approximately 22 mi². Cooperating landowners continuing to participate will receive an annual payment of \$2.40 per acre for parcels that remain enrolled in the adjusted RHA. Parcels removed from the RHA will not qualify for payment during the final four years of the project. The staff proposal is to modify the RHA description in administrative rule to reflect the reduced size.

OPTIONS

- Option 1. Approve staff proposal.
- Option 2. Reject staff proposal.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

- Option 1. Approve the Staff Proposal.

DRAFT MOTION:

I move to amend OAR Chapter 635, Division 065 as proposed by staff.

Effective Date: Upon Filing