



OREGON HUNTERS ASSOCIATION

Protecting Oregon's Wildlife, Habitat and Hunting Heritage

P.O. Box 1706, Medford, OR 97501 • (541) 772-7313
oha@oregonhunters.org • oregonhunters.org

To: Charlotte Regula-Whitefield
Oregon Conservation and Recreation Fund Coordinator

July 6, 2022

Please accept the following final report on Agreement #314-20 and the associated amendment number one to the Oregon Conservation and Recreation Fund (OCRF) Grant Agreement "Gilchrist Underpass Wildlife Directional Fencing". The highly appreciated grant was one of the first-round agreements between the State of Oregon OCRF acting by and through the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) and Oregon Hunters Association (OHA).

There is a lengthy backstory to the Gilchrist undercrossing on Highway 97 just north of the town of Gilchrist. In 2012 ODOT installed the first wildlife underpass near Lava Butte as required by the Deschutes National Forest during an Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) highway lane widening process. OHA's Bend Chapter subsequently performed maintenance on the ODOT installed wildlife funnel fencing directing wildlife to the double underpass installation. The requirement for both the underpasses and fencing at Lava Butte was informed by scientific information ODFW biologists had collected in a multi-year ungulate collaring project directed at establishing data on Mule Deer seasonal migration routes intersecting Highway 97. OHA, ODOT and ODFW were encouraged by ODOT monitoring of the underpass effectiveness showing an 85% plus reduction in wildlife vehicle collisions at Lava Butte.

The success in reducing wildlife loss and human costs from collisions at Lava Butte led to ODOT implementing another wildlife underpass set at Gilchrist, unfortunately there was no funding of the required funnel fencing to make the underpass effectively guide wildlife to the safe crossing underpasses. In 2017, OHA engaged with numerous agencies and nonprofit conservation organizations in attempting to raise the estimated one million dollars needed for the fencing. ODOT was delayed in installing the underpass due to contract, weather and COVID related delays until summer 2020. The coalition of funding partners continued our grant and donations efforts during the delay and succeeded at over \$870,000 of the needed funds raised, thanks to adding the support of OCRF both by this grant and by matching fund amounts on restricted donations specific to the Gilchrist fencing project.

At the time of this report, 60% of the original fencing design had been contracted by ODOT from the southern start of the fencing project continuing north for three miles on each side of Highway 97. A National Fish and Wildlife Fund grant and matching funds have been secured to complete the remaining fencing to meet the five miles on each side of the highway. ODOT has placed a priority on having a contract for the remaining fencing completed in 2022.

OHA and our many conservation partners wish to thank the OCRF and the OCRF Advisory committee for your continued support of Oregon's outdoor conservation and recreation goals.

Respectfully submitted,
/s/Ken McCall
OHA Northwest Oregon Director

ATTACHMENT 1-OCRF Final Report Agreement #314-20

Gilchrist Underpass construction and fencing articles and video related to the background and implementation of the Fencing project OCRF supported through grant funding and following up on grant funding match of Gilchrist Fencing Project restricted donation funds.

Gilchrist Underpass Construction: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ndLAsfc8fM8>

Gilchrist Fencing Installation 2021: <https://centraloregondaily.com/%e2%96%b6%ef%b8%8f-fencing-installed-to-guide-deer-and-elk-to-safe-passages-under-highway-97/>

Bend Bulletin Underpass article: https://www.bendbulletin.com/localstate/another-wildlife-crossing-planned-for-u-s-highway-97/article_94522bb1-e6e1-583f-a767-d5f4392405cb.html

Upcoming Wildlife underpasses in the Sunriver area, Highway 97:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o-4KkQgNDwQ>

Conservation Partners Contributing Funds to Gilchrist Fencing	
Organization (Only OCRF Grant and Match funds are Displayed)	Amount
Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation	
Mule Deer Foundation	
Oregon Hunters Association, Chapter Contributions	
Oregon Wildlife Foundation	
US Forest Service - Deschutes NF	
Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board	
National Fish and Wildlife Foundation	
Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (Materials Match)	
Pittman-Robertson Funds	
Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (Gilchrist Project Restricted)	
ODOT Material Source Program	
Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife Mule Deer Initiative	
VIA: Pew Charitable Trusts (Gilchrist Project Restricted)	
V IA: Olseth Family Foundation (Gilchrist Project Restricted)	
VIA: OCRF Grant to Oregon Hunters Association	\$10,000
OCRF 30% Retroactive match Olseth Family Foundation	\$9,000
OCRF 30% Retroactive match PEW Charitable Trusts	\$18,000
Sub Total	\$37,000
All Partnership funds raised and expended as of Dec 2021 Contracts	\$892,000*
New National Fish and Wildlife Fund Grant and Matching funds will Complete the Gilchrist Fencing in Fall 2022	
Crossing Design (OWF/ ODFW), Coastal Farm and Gilchrist State ODF support costs included	



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ATTACHMENT 2-OCRF Final Report Agreement #314-20

April 20, 2021

Oregon Department of Transportation
Attn: Kris Strickler, Director
355 Capitol St. NE, MS11
Salem, OR 97301-3871
RE: Highway 97 - Gilchrist Undercrossing Fencing

Dear Director Strickler

The Gilchrist funnel fencing financial contributors, among others, are your community partners; working with you to help complete the Gilchrist wildlife underpass project on highway 97.

This project, begun in 2017, is designed to reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions, both for the safety of the traveling public and for migrating and local wildlife. From the outset, this project has been a collaboration between Departments of the State of Oregon and multiple wildlife conservation organizations; a true example of a public/private partnership and an accomplishment that in itself is deserving of celebration.

When it became clear that ODOT did not have the funding needed for the fencing component of the Gilchrist project, a coalition quickly formed to raise the necessary funds. As of today, just over \$830,000 has been raised from private and public sources for the Gilchrist project. Additional efforts have been made, on behalf of the partnership, to obtain fencing materials at the lowest possible price when and as it became clear that costs would likely to be higher than originally anticipated.

With about \$760,000 of the funds raised for the fencing portion of the project coming from non-agency sources, our coalition anxiously awaits the start of ODOT's construction bidding process. As the clock ticks, animal-vehicle collisions continue to occur. Missed opportunities to prevent collisions include the Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 migration events. We want to see this project completed prior to the start of this Fall's migration but a series of delays within ODOT's processes are putting our expectations to the test.

We urge you to expedite your bid and contractor selection process. Additional delay jeopardizes the community and goodwill that ODOT has built with Oregon's conservation community through this project. We greatly appreciate ODOT's funding and construction of the Gilchrist underpass.

As you know, public support for wildlife passage and habitat connectivity is very high. A 2020 poll of Oregon voters by The Pew Charitable Trusts found that 86% supported the construction of more road crossings for animals. Completing this project, sooner than later, will be a feather in ODOT's cap.

Prioritizing action on this project communicates to your partners and the public that you share our commitment to motorist safety and wildlife passage. We respectfully request an update from you regarding the contracting process and a planned construction timeline that precedes this Fall's migration season. We await your reply. A listing of the non-agency contributors cc'd on this letter is included below the signature line along with others involved with the fencing project history.

Best Regards,

/s/ Ken McCall
Vice President
Oregon Hunters Association

CC:

Karl Wenner, OCRF
Tim Greseth, Oregon Wildlife Foundation
Bill Richardson, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation
Ken Hand, Mule Deer foundation
Laurel Williams, PEW Charitable Trusts
Karen Solomon, Olseth Family Foundation
Oregon Representative Ken Helm
Karen Rowe, ODOT Salem
Mcgregor Lynde ODOT Salem
Gary Farnsworth, ODOT Region Four, Bend

Although not cc'd here, funds have come from grants through Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, United States Forest Service and Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife has allocated Pitman/Robertson hunter excise tax and Mule Deer Initiative funds.

ATTACHMENTS 3-5 are PDF files from OHA media included in report packet.

OHA advocated for sensible bird regulations in 2020

By Tyler Dungannon, Conservation Coordinator
TD@oregonhunters.org

OHA urged the Commission to continue hunting sage-grouse due to the indispensable biological data that it yields, in addition to the recreational opportunity that it provides hunters who are fortunate enough to draw permits. Sage-grouse hunters provide biological data by sending hundreds of harvested wings each year to ODFW for analysis of demographic rates, such as nest success, sex ratio and age structure.

Hunters are at the front lines of conservation for the species, and it is imperative that sage-grouse maintain their gamebird status in order to receive support from hunting organizations, which substantially contribute to sage-grouse conservation. The future of sage-grouse hunting is uncertain, but OHA will continue to support the scientific evidence that legal harvest of sage grouse aids management and does not limit populations in Oregon.

OHA supported changes to turkey season dates, lifting of tag quotas and closing the fall turkey season for White River Wildlife Management Area to allow greater opportunity for hunters during the spring. OHA also applauded the ODFW



OHA supported continued sage grouse hunting and a fall turkey season lasting until Jan. 31.

proposal to add a small bag limit for mountain quail in eastern Oregon, as well as the agency's support for expanded hunting opportunities on National Wildlife Refuges.

OHA-supported OCRF bears fruit for wildlife

The Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission recently approved 8 projects funded by the Oregon Conservation and Recreation Fund (OCRF) – including two supported by OHA. Sportsmen have demonstrated once again that hunters and anglers are our state's premier conservationists, as the largest portion of revenue has been raised by hunters and anglers. The Gilchrist Wildlife Underpass Fencing Project received \$10,000 – the maximum amount that could be awarded to any one

project this year. This project aims to reduce deer and elk mortality on Highway 97, and OHA has pledged over \$114,000 to the effort.

OHA also endorsed the Ochoco Trails Project where recreationists can enjoy unique scenery, while minimizing disturbance to wildlife. This project received \$7,500 to create a trail network on the Crooked River National Grasslands. Project planners have been conscious of wildlife displacement issues, and this project aims to minimize human-instigated ungulate movement from public to private lands. Involvement in this project has allowed OHA to contribute to a project outside of the realm of our typical dealings, while investigating the possibility of upland gamebird hunting opportunities along the trail system.

OHA recently submitted an OCRF grant application to protect and restore habitat for mule deer and all wildlife along Smoke Creek. This area is located on Ecotrust Forest Management land southwest of Fort Rock and lies between Highway 97 and Route 31. This project requested \$9,000 of OCRF funds with aspiration for matching funds from the Oregon general fund.

OHA helped stop trap ban, continued outreach efforts

By Amy Patrick, OHA Outreach Coordinator
Amy@oregonhunters.org

What began as a request to ban beaver trapping on a single national forest grew into a rule-making petition to ban both recreational and commercial beaver trapping on all federal lands in the state.

The Fish and Wildlife Commission heard the initial requests regarding beaver trapping at the June Commission meeting, at which time they decided instead to create a workgroup to begin researching the issue. While those workgroups were being formed, the environmental groups who brought the initial requests and were invited to participate in the workgroup process decided they were not happy with that outcome.

In September, those groups submitted a petition to the Commission to change the regulatory rules to ban beaver trapping on all federal lands.

The Commission addressed this topic again at the November meeting, where

it failed to pass by a 3-3 vote. Accepting the petition would have opened the rule-making process with the intent to review the scientific basis of the request, while denying the petition effectively closed the door on any immediate changes to the beaver trapping regulations.

OHA continues to work with a broad coalition of other sportsmen's groups and natural resource organizations to fight this ban and promote science-based wildlife management.

Outreach meets social distancing

OHA's outreach plan for 2020 started off promisingly with great public outreach at the Pacific Northwest Sportsman's Show in February. In March, we secured participation in the Oregon Zoo's Twilight Tuesdays – summertime events that draw a large urban population, creating a new audience for OHA's conservation message.

In April, we realized that things were not going to continue as anticipated, and

instead we learned to use Zoom.

Embracing virtual meetings became the focus of outreach with the creation of Monday Meet-Ups to increase communication with chapter leadership. It became apparent that the virtual platform would be the new norm for the foreseeable future, not only for association communication, but also for agency and legislative arenas.

To assist the membership in participating in these opportunities, several staff members put together a presentation on providing effective testimony with an emphasis on the new virtual formats.

As we move into 2021, the focus will remain on increasing our use of virtual meetings and the incorporation of hybrid meetings to combine small, in-person meetings with a broader virtual audience. While person-to-person interaction is the goal for our outreach plans, we remain flexible and adaptable to the current constraints while we continue to bring the OHA message to new audiences.



OHA seeks migration policy

By Jim Akenson, Senior Conservation Director, Oregon Hunters Association and Lori McKinnon, President, Coastal Farm & Ranch

The Oregon Hunters Association urges ODFW to develop and implement a policy to enhance and conserve migratory habitat for big game, and all wildlife that make seasonal movements. Habitat connectivity, the degree to which separate habitat patches are connected, is a crucial factor for conservation of wildlife. Increases in urban and energy development have resulted in extensive habitat loss and fragmentation for many species in Oregon. Fortunately, advances in wildlife tracking technology have allowed wildlife managers to more accurately identify where animals move on the landscape, as well as impediments to wildlife space use. For ungulate species (e.g., deer, elk, pronghorn, bighorn sheep), migration corridors are fundamental to their life history, but until recently, these corridors were thought of as conduits between seasonal ranges rather than essential habitat.

Many big game migration corridors are currently obstructed by transportation infrastructure and energy development sites. Therefore, state agencies must consider the full extent of migratory habitat to better manage ungulate populations.

ODFW is making leaps and bounds through the Oregon Connectivity Assessment and Mapping Project, an innovative effort to map wildlife movement and corridors across the state. Oregon has an opportunity to ensure this new information leads to sound management solutions by developing agency policy to formally identify migration corridors.

This action will bolster current conservation projects where many groups (including OHA) are working to conserve and enhance migratory habitat. For example, OHA has pledged over \$114,000 and many volunteer hours to the Gilchrist Wildlife Underpass Project aimed at reducing ungulate mortality and vehicle collisions on U.S. Highway 97. Additionally, a migration policy will frame new partnerships between private landowners, non-government organizations, and government agencies, which will result in additional conservation projects and funding sources.

Recently, Coastal Farm & Ranch, after obtaining the low bid to provide fencing material, generously supported the Gilchrist Wildlife Underpass Project by providing fencing materials at a discount below their initial low bid.

OHA's Bend Chapter has invested hundreds of volunteer hours maintaining the fence that funnels wildlife into the Lava Butte wildlife underpass on U.S. Highway 97, approximately 50 miles north of the new Gilchrist underpass. The Lava Butte wildlife underpass has reduced vehicle-wildlife collisions by 86 percent.

Individuals can support and help fund habitat connectivity and migration corridor projects by purchasing a specialized Watch for Wildlife license plate voucher at www.myowf.org/watchforwildlife

Global Positioning System (GPS) wildlife tracking collars have become commonplace in wildlife management today, and this shift toward more efficient and accurate technology will allow for more precise management into the future. GPS collars collect an immense amount of animal location data on fixed time schedules, and these data are ideal for describing ungulate resource selection and utilization and migratory habitat. A migration policy will assist ODFW and their partners in obtaining additional grant funding to provide wildlife professionals with additional GPS collars, which will in turn further our knowledge of migration corridors, resource selection, and population dynamics.

How can Oregonians assist with protecting wildlife and their habitats? By working with their local wildlife biologist, watershed managers, ODFW commissioners and legislators to promote continued research and policy development. In addition, the public can support protection of wildlife, their habitats, and mitigation from land management, urban, and energy development and transportation infrastructure projects through county, state and federal public comment processes.

OREGON HUNTER

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Official publication of the Oregon Hunters Association, dedicated to wise management of Oregon's huntable wildlife. United in protecting hunter interests in the state of Oregon.

Our mission: Protecting Oregon's wildlife, habitat and hunting heritage.

OREGON HUNTER (ISSN 1545-8059) is published bimonthly by the Oregon Hunters Association for its membership and is sold on newsstands statewide. Membership rates are: Individual: \$35 a year, \$65 for two years, \$90 for three years, \$80 for lifetime, \$10 for junior, \$12.50 for full-time student; family: \$45 a year, \$80 for two years, \$90 lifetime; business membership \$75. Memberships include \$5 magazine subscription. Periodicals postage paid at Medford, Ore., and at additional mailing offices.

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Crossing Paths for Wildlife

Gilchrist wildlife passage project creates enduring partnerships and conservation leadership

As the new wildlife underpass project on Highway 97 at Gilchrist nears completion, OHA chapters can take pride in the fact that they have helped raise both funds and awareness for safe migration in Oregon.

But the project’s approaching conclusion is just a beginning.

OHA leaders have been working on wildlife safe passage projects on Oregon’s highways since 2017. At OHA’s 2018 annual Chapter Leadership Summit that featured a theme of habitat, wildlife, and partnership connectivity, speakers Suzanne Lindford, director of Protect Animal Migration, and Cidney Bowman, Wildlife Passage Coordinator for ODOT, focused on the need for safe wildlife passage specific to Highway 97 by sharing information on wildlife/vehicle collisions, the success at the Lava Butte wildlife crossing project (85 percent reduction in deer mortality) and the impact that wildlife/vehicle collisions have on our deer and human lives.

Their presentations described the requirement of fencing to funnel deer to the wildlife crossings and the fact ODOT was installing an underpass at Gilchrist and not funding the required fencing necessary for effective wildlife passage.

That fencing project cost was estimated at \$1 million. Presentations by OHA member Monty Gregg of the Deschutes National Forest and Tim Greseth of Oregon Wildlife Foundation sparked conversations about raising funds to build that fence.

OHA’s Yamhill County Chapter challenged all other OHA chapters to pledge funds for the Gilchrist fencing project. Chapter pledges totaled \$118,500, and a \$10,000 grant from Oregon Conservation



OHA has invested \$118,500 in the new Hwy 97 wildlife crossing project fencing near Gilchrist and helped secure much more, while widening the scope of needed crossing projects statewide.

OHA Contributions to Gilchrist Hwy 97 Crossing Fencing Project	
Yamhill County	\$20,000
Rogue Valley	\$20,000
Mid-Willamette	\$10,000
Bend	\$10,000
Josephine County	\$7,500
Clatsop County	\$5,000
Pioneer	\$5,000
Umpqua	\$5,000
Tualatin Valley	\$5,000
Emerald Valley	\$5,000
Klamath	\$5,000
Capitol	\$5,000
Tillamook	\$1,000
OHA State Grant	\$15,000
OCRf Grant by OHA	\$10,000
Grand Total	\$128,500

and Recreation Fund brought the OHA donation to \$128,500. OHA played a key role in the efforts to bring in additional partners from hunter conservation organizations, state and federal agencies, and wildlife advocates. A coalition of 18 organizations was developed and a total of \$870,000 has been raised by this group to date.

So where are we with the Gilchrist fencing project? The underpass construction was completed by ODOT in summer 2020. Three of the five miles of fencing on each side of the highway were constructed by fall 2021 with the expectation that the 5 miles of fencing would be completed in 2022. The project timeline is nearly two years behind schedule due to a long list of hurdles including weather, rapidly increasing costs of materials, contract delays and other challenges, including COVID.

The wildlife migration barrier presented by Highway 97 is just one of many statewide safe passage locations needing improvement. OHA has worked continuously over the past few years becoming a leader and partner in these landscape-level efforts to improve habitat and provide wildlife passage and has expanded our reach in this critical work.

The Gilchrist fencing project demonstrates OHA’s ability to effectively support and implement wildlife habitat actions statewide.

The funding acquisition for the Gilchrist regional project was a template that we duplicated in the recent Minam property acquisition wherein OHA chapters combined to contribute \$100,000 to help RMEF purchase thousands of acres of ungulate winter range in northeast Oregon.

OHA’s localized chapter structure, position of influence with wildlife agencies, legislators, private landowners and public land managers puts us in a position to continue wildlife passage projects. OHA is deeply involved in migratory habitat connectivity through membership in the Oregon Action Team on Ungulate Migration, which provides leadership in identifying wildlife passage projects and funding acquisition.

It is important to note raising funds like those needed to fence the Gilchrist undercrossing is not a sustainable model. Larger funding sources will be required for the multimillion-dollar wildlife passage projects identified statewide.

Oregon is far behind other western states in these efforts, but we are now in a position to be much more proactive and effective than we were in 2017.