

Access and Habitat Board Meeting
April 29, 2009
John Day, Oregon

Steve McClelland called the meeting to order 8:45 am.

Attendees:

A&H Board Members: Steve McClelland (Chair), Barry DelCurto, Ron Borisch, Jim Morrell, Duane Bernard, Tom Alkire

ODFW Staff: A&H Coordinator, Matt Keenan; Administrative Assistant, Heather Thomas; and Habitat Program Manager, Eric Rickerson

A&H Regional Coordinators: Jon Paustian, Troy Laws, Crystal Strobl, Dan Gonzalez, and Mark Vargas (for Vince Oredson)

On the phone: Jim Young

Review of the January 27, 2009 Meeting Minutes:

Ron Borisch motioned to approve the minutes; Duane Bernard seconded the motion. Motioned passed unanimously (5:0).

Board Member Reports:

- Barry DelCurto: Went to RMEF chapter banquet in La Grande and MDF National banquet in Salt Lake City, UT – both auctions were a success.
- Ron Borisch: Auction events seem to be working very well this year with two board members in attendance at each event.
- Jim Morrell: Attended the OBH banquet in Lincoln City; testified in front of the legislature on behalf of the A&H Board for HB2218 (A&H surcharge increase and sunset extension).
- Duane Bernard: Testified in front of the legislature during hunter night at the capitol; Attended RMEF's National banquet in Fort Worth TX, it went very well and was very good to have an A&H booth at the convention – felt it made a big difference. Also attended several other banquets, all went very well.
- Tom Alkire: Attended the Portland OHA banquet.
- Steve McClelland: Thanks the Board for attending all of the events throughout the last several months and to those that took the time to go to the capitol to testify.

Legislative Update:

Eric Rickerson, Habitat Program Manager, gave the Board an update on legislative issues.

The Access & Habitat bill (HB 2218) passed out of the House 40:17. This bill would:

- Extend the Access and Habitat Program to 2019.
- Increase surcharge to \$4.
- Remove the requirement for 15 Landowner Representative Board applicants, and replace with a requirement of only 5 Landowner Representatives.

HB 2628, which would allow A&H funds to be used to purchase access easements across private property to get to public land, did not get a hearing before the April 17th deadline, but it may get wrapped up in another bill.

Coordinator's Report:

- Completion Reports received for Sheep Mountain Habitat Enhancement and Access Project, C2 Ranch Habitat Improvement, and Timbers/Spring Butte TMA
- Have received several grants for the Oregon Hunting Access map: \$80k from National Shooting Sports Foundation, \$20k from Oregon Wildlife Heritage Foundation, and \$10k Game Bird Stamp. There may be a request for A&H funds in the future for \$10-15k.
- Commission Packet - cooperator funds for access projects: Matt asked the Board if they would like staff to quantify landowners' administrative, in-kind contributions to access projects. The Board feels that there should be a dollar amount (or range) for each project to reflect an estimate of what the landowners will be contributing (via paperwork, time spent communicating with hunters, road maintenance, etc.).

By-Permission Access Areas:

Matt initiated discussion about by-permission hunting access, and requested clarification concerning the definition of an "access & habitat" project. After lengthy discussion involving both Board members and ODFW staff, the following standard was approved by the Board:

* Habitat-only projects may receive one additional point on the project evaluation form if they allow some level of access, even if it is only to friends and family. These landowners will NOT be listed on the internet or in the Private Land Hunting Opportunities packet.

* All true "access & habitat" projects (those receiving more than 1 point for "access" criteria on the project evaluation form) will be listed in the Private Land Hunting Opportunities packet, but will not generally be posted on the internet.

Public Comment:

John Morris, lifelong resident of Grant County who owns a small ranch in John Day, OR that provides winter range and limited summer range for mule deer provided comments related to Board discussion topics. He is a retired wildlife biologist from the Forest Service and BLM.

Landowner Contributions: Suggested a form be developed to give to landowners enrolled in the program for them to fill out and calculate their contributions.

By Permission Hunting: Allows by-permission hunting on his property. Gives the opportunity to youth and seniors first, and always limits the number of individuals on his property to ensure everyone gets a quality hunt.

Regional Coordinator's Report:

Jim Young: Has been working with a landowner in the Willamette Valley potentially interested in enrolling in the A&H program, but has some concerns with administering the access. It has great potential and will hopefully come in front of the Board soon.

Crystal Strobl: Active projects in the Deschutes Watershed are:
(1) Star One Trust, which is restoring livestock damage and riparian areas, thinning juniper, and improving critical deer range. It also helps with crop damage the landowner is experiencing. If possible, would like to include the property in the tour for the Board in October. (2) Timbers Spring Butte TMA (3) Lane Sage Grouse Enhancement, which is a juniper cutting project on mule deer wintering ground. This project should be finished in November of this year.

Troy Laws: Would like a way to acknowledge landowners that are not currently enrolled in a program but are currently allowing access on their property. Jim Morrell suggested that at the end of each season or at the end of each contract we (the A&H Board) send the landowners a letter acknowledging them for and thanking them for allowing access to hunters.

There will be three projects in the N Willamette that will be coming up for renewal at the next meeting.

Mark Vargas: Has seen an increase in the number of inquiries from landowners about the A&H program; especially from those with elk damage.

Dan Gonzales: Spent some time with Irwin to develop project proposal. Also spent a lot of time with Dan Jordan; he will probably use A&H funds to hire a contractor and the District will pay for the fencing materials. There is some concern with the Alvord landowners on how they want to move forward with the project.

In the process of developing maps for the upcoming hunting year. Will have a potential project proposal coming in from the Riverside Wildlife Area.

Jon Paustian: Has been working with BMEI and trying to get some contract issues worked out with the Forest Service.

Having some issues with antler hunters on the welcome to hunt year round properties, proposing to reduce the access period and close it Jan 1 to April 10 (for spring bear and turkey hunters).

Regional Council Appointments:

High Desert – Deschutes/Klamath Council

Discussion:

The High Desert – Deschutes/Klamath Regional Advisory Council has two vacant positions: one Hunter Representative position and one Landowner Representative. The council voted to appoint Bill Friedlander to the Hunter Representative position; and Brad Klann to the Landowner Representative position.

Motion:

Duane Bernard motioned to appoint Bill Friedlander to the High Desert – Deschutes/Klamath Regional Advisory Council Hunter Representative position; Ron Borisch seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously 5:0.

Jim Morrell motioned to appoint Brad Klann to the High Desert – Deschutes/Klamath Regional Advisory Council Landowner Representative position; Duane Bernard seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously 5:0.

High Desert/Malheur Council

Discussion:

The High Desert/Malheur Regional Advisory Council has one Landowner Representative position vacant. The council voted to appoint Duncan Mackenzie to the Landowner Representative position.

Motion:

Barry DelCurto motioned to appoint Duncan Mackenzie to the High Desert/Malheur Regional Advisory Council Landowner Representative position; Duane Bernard seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously 5:0.

Budget Update:

Matt provided an update of the current A&H Program budget (refer to A&H Board Packet).

Project Review:

#2009-17 Irwin Habitat Project

Regional Coordinator Dan Gonzalez presented the project (refer to the A&H Board Packet for the Regional Council review and application for detailed information on the project).

Discussion:

This project would develop a 1.5 acre pond to provide water for wildlife.

Motion:

Duane Bernard motioned to approve the project as proposed; Jim Morrell seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously 5:0.

#2009-16 Palomino Butte Access Project

Regional Coordinator, Dan Gonzalez presented the project (refer to the A&H Board Packet for the Regional Council review and application for detailed information on the project).

Discussion:

This project would provide 7,343 acres of welcome to hunt access, and would open up an additional 640 acres of inaccessible public land.

Motion:

Jim Morrell motioned to fund the project as proposed; Duane Bernard seconded the motion. The motion did NOT pass (2:3). [Approving votes: Jim Morrell, Duane Bernard; descending votes: Ron Borisch, Tom Alkire, Barry DelCurto]

Discussion:

Ron thought that because of the current budget situation; the landowner should not get compensated for accessible public land. Barry agreed, he thought that the project was a very valid project but has a hard time justifying paying the per acre fee on public lands.

Motion:

Ron Borisch motioned to approve the project EXCLUDING the payment for accessible public acreage for a new project amount of \$18,237.60. Barry DelCurto seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously (5:0).

#2009-13 Timbers Spring Butte TMA

Regional Coordinator Crystal Strobl presented the project (refer to the A&H Board packet for the Regional Council review and application for detailed information on the project).

Discussion:

This project would continue to provide hunter access on Cascade Timberlands property, while controlling access through road travel management and increased law enforcement.

Motion:

Ron Borisch motioned to fund the project as proposed; Tom Alkire seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously (5:0).

#2009-09 Rufenacht Land and Cattle Co Access Area

Regional Coordinator Jon Paustian presented the project (refer to the A&H Board packet for the Regional Council review and application for detailed information on the project).

Discussion:

This project would provide open public hunting on 5,647 acres of private land from August 1 through July 31.

Motion:

Duane Bernard motioned to approve the project as proposed; Tom Alkire seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously (5:0).

#2009-10 Imnaha River Canyon Access Area

Regional Coordinator Jon Paustian presented the project (refer to the A&H Board packet for the Regional Council review and application for detailed information on the project).

Discussion:

This project would provide three months of funding for an ODFW technician to patrol and enhance wildlife habitat on 6,673 acres of The Nature Conservancy lands (26 parcels).

Motion:

Duane Bernard motioned to approve the project as proposed; Tom Alkire seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously (5:0).

#2009-12 Lost Valley Ranch

Regional Coordinator Jon Paustian and Wildlife Technician Travis Schultz from the Heppner District office presented the project (refer to the A&H Board packet for the Regional Council review and application for detailed information on the project).

Discussion:

This project would open 6,336 acres of welcome to hunt access; it is located in the Fossil unit which is 86% private land.

Motion:

Jim Morrell motioned to approve the project as proposed; Barry DelCurto seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously (5:0).

#2009-14 New River Aleutian Goose

District Biologist Mark Vargas and Landowner Rick McKenzie (by phone) presented the project (refer to the A&H Board packet for the Regional Council review and application for detailed information on the project).

Discussion:

This project would provide public waterfowl hunting by allowing hunter access to a large private ownership shared by four landowners, with additional access to an otherwise inaccessible tract of BLM land. This area represents the only large scale waterfowl hunting opportunity on the Southern Oregon Coast.

Motion:

Jim Morrell motioned to approve the project as proposed; Ron Borisch seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously (5:0).

#2009-15 C2 Ranch Habitat Improvement

District Biologist Mark Vargas presented the project (refer to the A&H Board packet for the Regional Council review and application for detailed information on the project).

Discussion:

This project proposes to improve wildlife habitat through removing Himalayan blackberry from pasture, cutting brush, and fertilizing. It will provide youth hunting opportunities including 7 deer hunts and 3 spring turkey hunts for 2 seasons (2009-10 and 2010-11).

Motion:

Duane Bernard motioned to approve the project as proposed; Barry DelCurto seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously (5:0).

Adjourn:

Steve adjourned the meeting at 2:35 PM.