

**Access & Habitat Board Teleconference Meeting
ODFW Headquarters Salem
4034 Fairview Industrial Dr SE, Salem**

January 10, 2017

Attendees

Board Members:

By Teleconference: Craig Ely, Chair; Dave Stiefvater; Alan Christensen; Doug Baily;
Willie Bronson

In Person: Candy Yow

ODFW Salem Headquarters:

In Person: Isaac Sanders, A&H Program Coordinator; Josephine Davis, Program Assistant; Tom Thornton, Game Program Manager

Regional Coordinators:

By Teleconference: Jon Paustian; Nancy Breuner; Dave Nuzum; Vince Oredson; David Stroppel;
Maryann Brooks; Steve Cherry; Matt Keenan, Andrew Walse

Public: John and Lynn Breese, Prineville; Jim Wood, Aspen Valley Ranch; Mark Saelens, Lincoln County Solid Waste District; Joe Steere, Association of Concerned Landowners in Lincoln County; Gary Davey, Lincoln County Sheriff Office; Seth Hulett, Morrow SWCD

Chair Craig Ely called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. starting with introductions of all attendees.

Meeting Minutes Review

Dave commented that there is an error in the Public Comment section. Dan Joyce was not a former member of the A&H Board, he is the Malheur County Judge. Dave approved the October 18, 2016 meeting minutes with corrections on the Public Comment as presented by Dave. Doug seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously 6:0.

Project Reviews

Lincoln County Forest Patrol Project

Regional Coordinator David Stroppel, Mark Saelens, and Joe Steere, and Gary Davey presented this project (refer to A&H Board packet for the Regional Council Review and Application for detailed information on the project).

This project, which has been ongoing since 1994. This project provides law enforcement on private timber lands to prevent illegal dumping and other violations so that the landowners can continue to keep their lands open (free of charge) for access during hunting seasons.

In addition, the deputy coordinates cleanup activities. Beginning in 2017, the deputy will also cruise USDA Forest Service land in Lincoln County while traveling between member properties, or while investigating specific potential violations as requested.

Discussion:

- *Alan asked about the ongoing Linn County's timber lawsuit against the state and if that is going to affect the budget and if the vehicle counters are still in place. Mark replied that the lawsuit will not affect Lincoln County's budget because this project is funded through the Association of Concerned Landowners, Lincoln County, Sheriff's Office, and this grant. They no longer have the vehicle counter at this time but can install it again in the fall to get updated data.*
- *Deputy Davey said that during the September-December hunting season there are more activities because a lot of people are out there hunting during the weekend. He adjust his shift to accommodate the property owners concerns and also to makes sure people are not going beyond the travel management area.*
- *Alan wants more updated data and perhaps put those vehicle counters out will help get that data. David agreed.*
- *Craig wants to know if Deputy Davey acts on the game violations on the incident reports. Davey said he turns violations in to the Oregon State Police but work alongside with them.*
- *Craig complimented Deputy Davey for the report, he finds them extremely valuable and shows exactly what A&H Board is helping to fund. It also helps extremely in understanding the project.*
- *Joe Steere appreciate the law enforcement program in this area. It's a good program and the landowners can tell the difference when law enforcement is present.*
- *Doug Baily asked if this project suits the budget we currently have. Isaac answered it is and is projected in the budget spreadsheet that he submitted to the Board.*

Motion:

Allan moved to approve the project as proposed.

Willie seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously 6:0.

Columbia Plateau Cooperative Habitat Initiative

Regional Coordinator Jon Paustian, Steve Cherry, Seth Hulett, and Melody Henderson presented this project (refer to A&H Board packet for the Regional Council Review and Application for detailed information on the project).

The Columbia Plateau Cooperative Habitat Initiative is intended to help address the habitat related decline of mule deer and upland game bird populations in the Columbia Plateau. Funding will help supply the Habitat Technician of Morrow SWCD with materials to implement habitat improvement projects. Materials include fuel, seed, chemicals, equipment service and repair.

Additionally, funding will fund seasonal help for the project. Overall, this grant will increase the effectiveness of the ODFW/SWCD cooperatively funded Habitat Technician position. This project is also intended to help address habitat related decline of mule deer and upland game bird populations in the Heppner and Columbia Basin Wildlife Management Units. The project focuses on improving grass land structure and forb diversity, protecting riparian habitat, and enhancing Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) habitat quality. The ODFW/SWCD cooperation will continue to increase the wildlife-focused benefits of these program and provide an efficient means of working with the multitude of private landowners.

Discussion:

- *Alan asked why Pheasants Forever is mentioned on the project proposal but not on the budget and also since this is a mule deer project, what are the Mule Deer Foundation (MDF) contributions and what is the current CRP ruling against grazing or haying under drought conditions? Steve said that Pheasants Forever is a silent partner. Its local chapter is defunct and not active anymore but their equipment is on a long-term loan to the SWCD to use. They have approach MDF in the past and have received small grants. They have just completed the last grant from MDF. Seth said that Morrow SWCD has an agreement with the landowner that they cannot graze on land the project is on for a period of time. There are some options when grazing is good to help with vegetation control before they treat undesirable plants.*
- *Doug wanted to know if the SWCD have changed their planting practices due to warm and arid weather pattern. Steve said they have adjusted their seed rate depending on seed prices, their planting started slower because of the heat but it recovered after the late rain.*

Motion

Doug moved to approve the project as proposed.

Candy seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously 6:0.

Budget Update on Open Fields Projects

Isaac presented the budget for Open Field grant obligations. (Refer to A&H Board packet for the Coordinator's budget summary for detailed information on the budget).

Discussion:

- *Alan wanted to know when the deadline in spending the Open Fields money is. Isaac replied in 2018 and the projects must be under contract beginning of September 2018.*
- *Craig asked how far out after it's under contract they will funnel the dollars. Isaac said that once they obligate the money, A&H will ask for the money and they give it and it's up to the Board to spend it out over the agreed period of the contract. The money can be spent until the end of fiscal year 2021.*

Aspen Valley Ranch 2017

Regional Coordinator Nancy Breuner, Jim Wood, and Matt Keenan presented this project (refer to A&H Board packet for the Regional Council Review and Application for detailed information on the project).

This project proposes to cut 850 acres of juniper at a cost of \$100/ac, to improve mule deer and elk winter range and restore hydrologic function to the ecosystem. It will develop 5 springs with steel troughs, at a cost of \$5,000 each, to provide year round water sources for wildlife and to distribute cattle and keep them out of local streams. It will treat 225 acres of weeds with herbicides, to control spread of invasive plants and reduce impacts to native plant species. Using a contractor, it will burn 1,000 acres a year for three years, at a cost of \$31.50/ac. This burning regime will kill emerging juniper seedlings and minimize the chance of catastrophic wildfire which could destroy thousands of acres of prime mule deer habitat and leave the landscape vulnerable to noxious weed infestation. This project will allow 110 hunters (330 hunter days) to hunt on the property "By Permission" annually for three years (2017-2019).

Discussion:

- *Steve asked how the online reservation system is implemented. Matt explained that the online reservation is managed at the Point of Sale (POS) system. The same website hunters go when they buy their license and tags. Hunters will select "Private lands hunting opportunities" and click on "Aspen Valley Ranch". It opens on August 1st at 6:00am and it's on a first-come-first-serve basis. For deer/elk archery hunts, only 1 hunting party of 2 hunters will be permitted access at any one time. They receive a 3-day block and they will be the only party there for 3 days. Two hunting parties will be permitted during each hunt period for rifle mule deer, elk, and cougar season. The Heppner ODFW Field Office can also help hunters reserve online if they stop in the office or call.*
- *Alan mentioned that OWEB is also funding juniper removal projects. Matt will talk to the Watershed Councils and landowners and look into OWEB funding as well. Jim said that OWEB is working on adjacent lands but some landowners does not want to participate in any projects.*
- *Doug asked if A&H Board has any liabilities on the project. Matt said they never have any issues with liabilities as the direct contract is being done between the landowner and the contractors. A&H is separated from the legal side of it.*
- *Doug asked if USFS or Department of Ag are working on juniper control in the area. Matt said that to his knowledge there are no work being done currently. The juniper uplands are far away from national forest lands like the USFS and BLM. Jim said they partnered in the past with the Oregon State Weed Board, NRCS, and Watershed Councils on juniper projects.*
- *Dave asked about the availability of pheasants, Chukar, and valley quail hunting in this project area. Matt said that there are hardly any pheasants there. Jim said that when it comes to upland game birds there are very limited opportunity here. Years ago they tried to put uplands birds but there is a huge rapture component and they have watched it increase through the years. They also leave Coyotes alone to control their rabbit problem. Historically game birds have a hard time in the project area.*

- *Candy Yow commented that this is exciting for hunters to get an opportunity for exclusive hunts like this and she had done juniper control privately and understands that it's hard to get rid of. The overall package of this project is exciting.*

Motion

Willie moved to approve the project as proposed.

Dave seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously 6:0.

Dixie Meadows 2017

Nancy Breuner, Matt Keenan, and John Reese presented this project (refer to A&H Board packet for the Regional Council Review and Application for detailed information on the project).

This project proposes to cut, lop, and scatter 800 acres of juniper. In 5-10 years, the landowner will then burn and slash and will provide labor. Landowner will install 5,280 feet of waterline and one aluminum water trough with wildlife escapement ramp. Landowner will allow 70 hunters (213 hunter days) to hunt "By Permission" on 5,835 acres.

Discussion:

- *Dave asked if this is similar to the Dixie project with the online registration. Matt said yes, it is the same exact system.*
- *Nancy commented that there is also antelope and elk hunting along with deer and there is opportunity to extend the pronghorn reservation longer than just the 3 days. Dave wanted to know if there has been successful antelope hunting in this area. Nancy said that two years ago there was an antelope taken.*
- *Craig asked if this project is in the sage grouse core areas. Matt said no, there are in sage grouse historic range, so the birds are a consideration for sure, but not in core area.*
- *Alan looked at the map and commented that the 2 Open Fields projects are fairly largescale but only about 30 miles apart. Is there a possibility to lump Dixie Meadow and Aspen Valley burn projects together? Matt said that landowner are in contact with each other. He wants to keep them engaged and if they want to piggy back, that's a good thing to discuss and they will encourage the conversation.*

Motion

Alan moved to approve the project as proposed.

Doug seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously 6:0.

Other Discussions

Isaac said he rescheduled the ethics presentation for July. Hopefully the veterinarian can come to talk about the hoof rot disease. Isaac wants to discuss the project recommendation guidelines and minor changes to the project proposal forms more in the next meeting. He wants to add more details in the budget narrative to describe the budget a little bit better and the most significant is a use data section on the project proposal form.

Isaac wants to remind the board that when they are traveling to various auctions this year with their spouses to ensure that they contact the auction coordinators to let them know that they will need to buy an extra banquet ticket for guest/spouse. Also do it as soon as possible because these banquet dinners fill out quickly.

Craig said that he had a conference call with Isaac, Kevin (Deputy Administrator of Wildlife Division) and Tom Thornton (Game Program Manager) regarding meeting with Regional Coordinators about challenging them to start looking at different access projects. Also the Commission asked that one of the A&H Board members attend the Commission meetings to help explain the decisions for project funding.

Alan suggested that Isaac email a draft of the biennial report to the Board for one last look. There is no time for big changes as the report needs to be wrapped up by the end of the month so Isaac needs the comments back from the Board within 24 hours so the graphic designer can get it done by the deadline.

Dave welcome the new Chairman of the A&H Board Craig Ely. Craig thanked Dave. Craig recommend Dave to run the April meeting in his absence as he is selected by the Commission as the Vice-chair. Dave is happy to step in for Craig to run the April meeting.

Doug wanted everyone to take a look at the auction sign-up sheet again to make sure there is no burden on the new chairman who has four auction events to attend this year. If the Chairman wants a relief to speak up now before staff starts making reservations. Craig has no problem attending all four functions at this time. If there is a new Board member in time for these events, Craig can slide some of the functions to the new member.

Isaac commented on the reserve account balance at the end of the biennium. There should be around a million dollars in excess. There should be at least one half of a million in the account at any given time to cover the inflow and outflow of funds to make sure we don't overspend. About a million dollars is basically what the program needs for one year assuming there is no money coming in. Currently a little over a million a year is spent between administration and just paying the various fees for the projects.

Tom Thornton commented that it's good to look at how much is the carry-over and one of the things to do is look through limitation here in other programs so that A&H may be able to spend down some of that balance over the next couple of years without going to the emergency board. A&H needs to be cautious about is putting it into recurring programs building up an expectation that can't be maintained in the future. The Board have to be very careful with how the dollars is spent.

Craig wants the Board and staff to share their contact information to the rest of the Board.

Meeting adjourned at 12:00pm