

2017 Access & Habitat Priorities Department Biologists Survey Responses

As part of the effort to identify funding priorities for Access & Habitat (A&H), the Department sent an online survey to over 60 Department wildlife staff in the summer of 2017. The nine- question survey asked each respondent to provide input on habitat and access issues by A&H Region. Of the 15 surveys completed; 6 were for the Deschutes/Klamath Region, 4 for the South Willamette, 2 Southwest, and one each from Northeast, Malheur, and North Willamette.

A follow-up survey sent in early December to underreporting Districts resulted in 7 additional responses. The Umatilla, Wallowa, Baker, and Grant Districts replied from the Northeast Region. The Malheur Region garnered two more responses from the Harney District, and one reply from the Klamath District in the Deschutes/Klamath Region completes the response from the second round.

Below are a few highlights from the responses to the follow up survey. Complete survey responses are included at the end.

For the Northeast Region maintaining access to the Hancock Forest Management lands and the A&H projects in the Lookout Mt Wildlife Management Unit (WMU) were widely cited as important. Treatment of juniper and invasive annual grasses, especially on winter range, was the most noted habitat need. Several areas experiencing chronic damage are identified, south Sumpter, lower Wallowa Valley, and Alder Slope.

For Harney District in the Malheur Region maintaining access to the Steens Mt. projects (Alvord, Kueny, Jenkins, and Otley) and the Lawen tracts are important, restarting the Peila access, possibly expanding the Pine Creek and looking at Roaring Springs Ranch again were mentioned. Treatment/control of invasive annual grasses remains a top priority on the habitat front. A way to join hunters and landowners in a manner that allows them to work together and build mutual trust was discussed as way to help address damage/access on private property.

Green Diamond Resource Center TMA is a very important access project for the Klamath District, with Basin View Ranch (Klamath WMU) and King Ranch (Keno WMU) as areas for future projects. Treating juniper, improving shrub component and guzzler/spring projects identified as important habitat actions.

2017 Access & Habitat Priorities Follow-up Survey

Q1. Wildlife District? **Wallowa**

Q2. Person completing the survey? **Matthews**

Q3. Please identify the most important habitat action(s) needed in your District.
1) Noxious weed control.
2) Forage seeding on private lands.

Q4. Please identify areas and/or properties in your District that you consider a priority for habitat work and identify the action needed.
Noxious weed control and forage seeding in the Sled Springs, Chesnimnus, Snake River and Imnaha units.

Q5. Please identify any current or past A&H habitat projects that are important to maintain, continue, or restart.
Public access to Hancock Timber lands.

Q6. Please identify current A&H Access projects to maintain or expand and why they are important.
Maintain current project agreement with Hancock Timber to continue allowing public access to lands in the Wenaha, Sled Springs, and Minam units. This project provides a majority of public hunting access particularly in the Sled Springs unit.

Q7. Are there any additional areas in your District that A&H should focus on securing access too (please be as specific as practical). Why? --- Improve hunting, deal with damage, open up inaccessible or hard to access area?
The Hancock timber land in the Minam unit. It would provide additional hunting access to Hancock lands as well as access to National Forest lands.

Q8. Please identify areas experiencing damage from big game where an A&H project could help address the damage. What type of project? ---Access for hunters, green forage, combination, etc.?
Forage improvement projects on private lands adjacent to the lower Wallowa Valley and along Alder Slope (upper valley) may help pull elk away from agricultural areas and alleviate damage. However, in most cases the rangeland would be difficult to establish good forage for elk. In both cases a big game fence would likely solve damage issues, but is likely not very realistic.

Q9. Please identify any opportunities to work with local sporting groups on habitat or access projects.

2017 Access & Habitat Priorities Follow-up Survey

Q1. Wildlife District?

John Day

Q2. Person completing the survey?

Ryan

Q3. Please identify the most important habitat action(s) needed in your District.

Invasive annual grass control

Q4. Please identify areas and/or properties in your District that you consider a priority for habitat work and identify the action needed.

Winter range in the Murderers Creek and Northside Unit.

Q5. Please identify any current or past A&H habitat projects that are important to maintain, continue, or restart.

Juniper control/winter range improvement on private and Philip W. Schneider wildlife area.

Q6. Please identify current A&H Access projects to maintain or expand and why they are important.

Juniper control/winter range improvement on private land and PWSWA. Juniper has encroached on mule deer winter range and is causing significant habitat degradation. There is a high interest from landowner to participate in the project and I think it is important to maintain the momentum that we have built with this project.

Q7. Are there any additional areas in your District that A&H should focus on securing access too (please be as specific as practical). Why? --- Improve hunting, deal with damage, open up inaccessible or hard to access area?

There is a handful of section of BLM lands near Dayville that are currently difficult to access. This would improve hunting opportunity and open up hard to access areas.

Q8. Please identify areas experiencing damage from big game where an A&H project could help address the damage. What type of project? ---Access for hunters, green forage, combination, etc.?

There are lots of area with damage but I don't think landowner would be willing to participate in the A and H program.

Q9. Please identify any opportunities to work with local sporting groups on habitat or access projects.

Shrub plantings in PWSWA. The wildlife experienced a fire in 2014 where much of the shrub component was lost. Efforts are currently underway to reestablish the shrub community and A& H could be a big supporter along with sport groups.

2017 Access & Habitat Priorities Follow-up Survey

Q1. Wildlife District?

Umatilla

Q2. Person completing the survey?

Rimbach

Q3. Please identify the most important habitat action(s) needed in your District.

Deer and upland game bird habitat is probably the most important

Q4. Please identify areas and/or properties in your District that you consider a priority for habitat work and identify the action needed.

No specific properties identified for habitat work at this time.

Q5. Please identify any current or past A&H habitat projects that are important to maintain, continue, or restart.

Current: Meacham Coop TMA and Hancock FM Access Lands (Blalock Mtn. and Lincton Mtn. Past: None

Q6. Please identify current A&H Access projects to maintain or expand and why they are important.

None.

Q7. Are there any additional areas in your District that A&H should focus on securing access too (please be as specific as practical). Why? --- Improve hunting, deal with damage, open up inaccessible or hard to access area?

In Umatilla District we have 4 areas of extreme elk damage. They are in the areas of Milton-Freewater (Walla Walla BGMU), Gurdane (Ukiah and Heppner BGMU), Echo/Butter Creek (Col Basin), and Cold Springs (Col Basin BGMU). These 4 areas are very tightly controlled in allowing little to no access by the public; this may change under certain circumstances but these issues in relation to A&H activities should not be forgotten.

Q8. Please identify areas experiencing damage from big game where an A&H project could help address the damage. What type of project? ---Access for hunters, green forage, combination, etc.?

See Q7. All of these areas, except possibly the Cold Springs area, could use an access for hunters in certain circumstances.

Q9. Please identify any opportunities to work with local sporting groups on habitat or access projects.

None at this time.

2017 Access & Habitat Priorities Follow-up Survey

Q1. Wildlife District?

Harney

Q2. Person completing the survey?

Rod Klus

Q3. Please identify the most important habitat action(s) needed in your District.

The greatest threat to sage steppe habitats in Harney District are invasive annual Grasses. Medusahead Rye (and cheat grass to some extent) keeps expanding its range in the District at a dramatic pace. Annual grasses are impacting native habitats by:

- **Outcompeting sagebrush and native grasses and not allowing them to re-establish following fires**
- **Shortening the fire return interval**
- **Greatly reducing forage and cover for sagebrush obligate species**

Juniper expansion and overstocked forests are other issues, but those are currently being receiving a good deal of attention.

Q4. Please identify areas and/or properties in your District that you consider a priority for habitat work and identify the action needed.

Medusahead rye control efforts anywhere that it is just beginning to become established. That generally means the central and western portions of Harney County. The eastern portion of the District around Warm Springs reservoir/Stinkingwater Mountains is already heavily infested. Efforts there would be good also, but it would have to be in conjunction with larger efforts to have any hope of success. Several larger control projects are currently underway.

Q5. Please identify any current or past A&H habitat projects that are important to maintain, continue, or restart.

I think all of the current A&H projects within the District are legitimate and I support maintaining them.

Alvord, Kueny, Jenkins, Otley all in the Steen Mountain Unit provide good big game hunting opportunity and access for all big game species present (deer, elk, pronghorn). All except Otley provided access for bighorn sheep also. The down side is tag numbers are fairly limited for big game hunting in the Steens, but there is a fair amount of private land in the Steens WMU, so private land access is useful. In addition Alvord and Kueny also provided excellent chukar hunting access, so that really provides a lot of opportunity to a large number of hunters.

Pine Creek provides good hunter access and opportunity for big game hunters (deer, elk and pronghorn) in the Malheur River Unit. It probably receives the most use from big game hunters of any of the A&H project in our District. Controlled big-game tags are relatively easy to draw for this unit, which is one reason this area receives so much use.

It also helps alleviate elk damage. My opinion is that we receive the most big game opportunity for our buck with this project.

Lawen access provides good opportunity for waterfowl and pheasant hunting. The strength of this area is that waterfowl and pheasant hunting opportunities on public land are extremely limited in Harney County. It is located close to Burns so it receives a lot of use locally. The downside of this is that habitat conditions vary greatly from year to year depending on water levels in Malheur Lake so opportunities are inconsistent.

I would also support restarting the Peila access. This is an area of the N. Juniper Unit that is largely private land near irrigated fields that have a history of damage from pronghorn, deer and especially elk. We have several antlerless hunts for deer, pronghorn and elk in this area to address damage and public access is a limiting factor.

Q6. Please identify current A&H Access projects to maintain or expand and why they are important.

See above, I support maintaining all of our current projects.

There may be an opportunity to expand the Pine Creek project area in the near future with a different landowner. I would be very supportive of that given the opportunity and success of the Pine Creek Project Area. This area also helps address elk damage.

Q7. Are there any additional areas in your District that A&H should focus on securing access too (please be as specific as practical). Why? --- Improve hunting, deal with damage, open up inaccessible or hard to access area?

I think that we just need to be opportunistic when good opportunities arise. I can't think of any important area where we need to seek out projects at this time.

Q8. Please identify areas experiencing damage from big game where an A&H project could help address the damage. What type of project? ---Access for hunters, green forage, combination, etc.?

Peila access as mentioned above (Q5). Access for hunters

Q9. Please identify any opportunities to work with local sporting groups on habitat or access projects.

Limited at this time.

2017 Access & Habitat Priorities Follow-up Survey

Q1. Wildlife District?

Harney

Q2. Person completing the survey?

Autumn Larkins

Q3. Please identify the most important habitat action(s) needed in your District.

Preservation and protection of intact sagebrush communities.

Q4. Please identify areas and/or properties in your District that you consider a priority for habitat work and identify the action needed.

In the past few years our district has experienced several large-scale mega fires. Much restoration has been performed by the BLM on public land but there may be opportunities to help fund and guide adjacent private landowners to recover their land appropriately and in the interest of benefiting wildlife. Alternatively in a more proactive effort we could partner with landowners to educate and help fund some preventative measures on their land to decrease the wildfire risks (reduction of fine fuel loads, fire breaks, etc).

Q5. Please identify any current or past A&H habitat projects that are important to maintain, continue, or restart.

The Jenkins/Otley Access project in the Steens Mtn WMU is extremely valuable to our big game and upland game bird hunters. It not only provides road access that connects great chunks of otherwise landlocked BLM, but also offers excellent hunting opportunities on the private land that would otherwise be unavailable.

Q6. Please identify current A&H Access projects to maintain or expand and why they are important.

SEE Q5.

Q7. Are there any additional areas in your District that A&H should focus on securing access too (please be as specific as practical). Why? --- Improve hunting, deal with damage, open up inaccessible or hard to access area?

It would be exciting to partner with Roaring Springs Ranch in the southern portion of our District as they are one of the largest land owners in the county and therefore have the potential to provide access and open some fantastic areas to hunting. The key with this land owner would be identifying a productive and useful area on their property. The last access agreement we had with them was a poor example of how to best utilize this program.

Q8. Please identify areas experiencing damage from big game where an A&H project could help address the damage. What type of project? ---Access for hunters, green forage, combination, etc.?

Most of the areas in our district are addressed through the damage fencing or damage tag programs. We occasionally have used green forage in the past to help with reseeding and such. The problem with using hunters to address damage on private land comes down to the relationships between hunter and landowner (most landowners don't want to use someone they don't know). The project needed here is a program in a format that helps connect the hunters and the landowners ahead of time, so that relationships can be formed prior to the damage occurring. Since the Master Hunter program is phasing out we need to find a way to replace and improve the original intent (to utilize ethical and responsible hunters to assist with damage issues). Is this something that the A&H program could facilitate? This concept could potential work well to answer Q9!!!

Q9. Please identify any opportunities to work with local sporting groups on habitat or access projects.

We are currently without a local OHA chapter but if we had some good projects identified and partner with OHA board members there may be interest to restart a chapter in our community. The local RMEF chapter may also be interested in some projects. I am not sure how active they have been in the past. My experience with this chapter has focused heavily on the annual banquet.

I think we could easily brainstorm some small easy to accomplish "one-day" projects around the district, such as fixing guzzler fences or other associated infrastructure, fixing aspen enclosures or riparian area improvements.

2017 Access & Habitat Priorities Follow-up Survey

Q1. Wildlife District?
Klamath

Q2. Person completing the survey?
Tom Collom

Q3. Please identify the most important habitat action(s) needed in your District.
Juniper treatments on private lands to improve shrub component. Increase maintenance of guzzler/spring developments. Thinning overstocked conifer stands on USFS lands (realize not appropriate for A&H funds).

Q4. Please identify areas and/or properties in your District that you consider a priority for habitat work and identify the action needed.

Private lands juniper treatments in Klamath Falls and Interstate Wildlife Management Units. Guzzler/spring developments in Fort Rock and Sprague Wildlife Management Units.

Q5. Please identify any current or past A&H habitat projects that are important to maintain, continue, or restart.

Basin View Ranch in Klamath Falls Wildlife Management. A&H funding has been used for juniper treatments, hunting access, seeding projects, and water developments. There may be opportunities for future projects. Limited hunting access has continued for this project.

Q6. Please identify current A&H Access projects to maintain or expand and why they are important.

Green Diamond Access Project. Largest Access project in the state providing almost 700,000 acres of hunting access in 5 Wildlife Management Units.

Q7. Are there any additional areas in your District that A&H should focus on securing access too (please be as specific as practical). Why? --- Improve hunting, deal with damage, open up inaccessible or hard to access area?

No potential properties at this time

Q8. Please identify areas experiencing damage from big game where an A&H project could help address the damage. What type of project? ---Access for hunters, green forage, combination, etc.?

King Ranch in Keno Wildlife Management Unit. Access and/or green forage. Landowner likely not interested in public access.

Q9. Please identify any opportunities to work with local sporting groups on habitat or access projects.

Fence maintenance on spring developments. Meadow enhancement projects.

2017 Access & Habitat Priorities Follow-up Survey

Q1. Wildlife District?
Baker

Q2. Person completing the survey?
Justin Primus

Q3. Please identify the most important habitat action(s) needed in your District.
Restore winter range forage for mule deer.

Q4. Please identify areas and/or properties in your District that you consider a priority for habitat work and identify the action needed.

Keating and Lookout Mountain Units would both benefit from improved habitat conditions. Last year's unusually harsh winter demonstrated the need for good winter habitat. The area lost 35% of adult does and had a fawn ration of 9 per hundred in the spring. Deep snows buried what forage was available to deer and the lack of browse led to many deer starving to death. Deer moved to the lowest elevations possible in search of food and decreased snow depth but there were no areas of open ground in Baker County for most of the winter. A shrub component above snow depth would have been beneficial to deer.

Q5. Please identify any current or past A&H habitat projects that are important to maintain, continue, or restart.

Q6. Please identify current A&H Access projects to maintain or expand and why they are important.

Access projects are especially important in the lookout mountain unit. The most important areas are the Forsea Access Area, Iron Mountain Area, and the Widman Access Area. These 3 areas see the most use from big game hunters and are the most popular with hunters. The lookout mountain unit is about three times over the management objective for elk. Having more places to hunt in a unit that is primarily private would allow us to begin to reduce this number. Reduced elk numbers would help alleviate damage, improve range conditions, and increase mule deer numbers.

The Forsea Access area is very important to bighorn sheep hunters. The access area is utilized heavily by the sheep throughout the year. The area is also very good for elk and deer hunting.

Q7. Are there any additional areas in your District that A&H should focus on securing access too (please be as specific as practical). Why? --- Improve hunting, deal with damage, open up inaccessible or hard to access area?

South Sumpter is an area that we are seeing more damage issues with elk recently. The area is private land with most landowners having large parcels of property. There are long easy to draw cow hunts for this area. Having more places for the public to hunt would allow us to improve the hunting experience for tag holders, help alleviate damage, and in some places it could help open up access to land locked parcels of BLM.

Q8. Please identify areas experiencing damage from big game where an A&H project could help address the damage. What type of project? ---Access for hunters, green forage, combination, etc.?

The Hereford/ Unity area of South Sumpter has growing numbers of elk on private land that cause damage in the growing season to alfalfa and pasture lands, and to haystacks in the winter.

Q9. Please identify any opportunities to work with local sporting groups on habitat or access projects.

Baker County has a local OHA chapter that could be interested in working on habitat projects.