



Access and Habitat Board Meeting Minutes

January 18, 2022
Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife
4034 Fairview Industrial Dr SE
Salem, Oregon 97302

This Access and Habitat Board meeting minutes is considered as a draft until approved by the Board.

Notice of these meetings had been published through Oregon Transparency Website and ODFW Website. <http://www.dfw.state.or.us/lands/AH/minutes/index.asp>, <http://www.oregon.gov/transparency/Pages/PublicMeetingNotices.aspx>

Those attending part or all of the meeting included:

Craig Ely, Board Chair	Tom Segal, ODFW
John Breese, Board Member	Travis Schultz, ODFW
Amy Patrick, Board Member	Kevin Blakely, ODFW
Morgan Olson, Board Member	Bernadette Graham-Hudson, ODFW
Nic Callero, Board Member	Brian Wolfer, ODFW
Willie Bronson, Board Member	Jon Paustian, ODFW
Candy Yow, Board Member	Jack Edwards, ODFW
Andrew Walch, ODFW	Bree Furfey, ODFW
David Nuzum, ODFW	Dylan Edwards, ODFW
David Stropple, ODFW	Craig Heuberger, OSP
Curt Melcher, ODFW	Paul Seitz, Lincoln County Waste District
	Eric Kranzush, Giustina Land & Timber

MEETING

On Tuesday, January 18, 2022, at 8:02 a.m. Chair Craig Ely called the Access and Habitat Board meeting to order.

Meeting Minutes Review

The meeting minutes from the October 19, 2021 and November 22, 2021 meetings were reviewed. Amy noted that there is an error on page three of the October 19, 2021 meeting in the spelling of Roy Elicker's name.

Motion: Willie Bronson moved to approve the October 19, 2021 minutes as amended as well as the November 22, 2021 minutes. Amy Patrick seconded the motion. The Motion carried unanimously 6-0.

Board Member Reports

John Breese, Landowner Representative

John reported that the elk didn't come down till after elk season but there are plenty of tracks now. He just completed a big project; 1600 juniper trees near Crooked River to get better fish habitat. Big project hauling full juniper trees down the road!

Amy Patrick, Hunter Representative

Amy reported that she has been doing a lot of work with OHA – rolling out Learn-to-Hunt Program for adult first-time hunters. She is putting together Sportsman Coalition; a new development getting up and running for voice of sportsman around the state. She said her role with OHA is shifting a bit – doing more policy and lobbying work and still some outreach.

Craig Ely, Chair

Craig reported that he is a member of the Starkey Welfare Committee and the recent analysis of elk body condition recorded very poor body fat prior to this winter. Primarily due to the drought conditions experienced this last summer. However, this fall there was good green-up conditions and this will help with survival throughout the winter.

Morgan Olson, Hunter Representative

Morgan said NE Oregon very cold and snow snap around Christmas and New Year's. He has been chasing chukers and running a few cats.

Nic Callero, Hunter Representative

Nic said the late cow tag kept him in the woods a couple months longer than normal. He enjoyed exploring coast range with his daughter.

Willie Bronson, Landowner Representative

Willie said he did not have a lot to report but noted that there are a lot of disgruntled hunters in Sled Springs unit regarding hunting fee.

Candis Yow, Hunter Representative

Currently in Arizona hunting Archery Javelina & deer. No luck yet but having fun. Working on first Arizona Ladies Hunting Camp March 18-20th at Flying E Ranch, its filling up so that's good. We had a great like hunting season as usual. I was injured while packing out a quarter of Randy's bull in mountains of Wyoming when I fell hard crossing a deadfall. I ruptured two disks and pinched a nerve in my spine. I am just now getting around better – made for a long painful hunting season. It is a great reminder to never take our time in God's Country for granted, but to always enjoy it to the fullest!

ODFW Director's Report

Curt Melcher, Director

Curt thanked the board for including him on the agenda and said he looks forward to when we can meet in person instead of virtual. He welcomed new A&H board members, Nic Callero and Morgan Olson and thanked all board members for their service with hunting and Wildlife advocacy; recognizing the uncompensated commitment of being on the board.

Curt thanked Chair Craig Ely for his eight years of service on the board and for their 30-year relationship as colleagues.

Curt also reported on the following:

- Update on Legislative short session. The short session typically does not see a lot of action or bills. Each legislator is limited to two bills.
- Statutes that describe Fish and Wildlife Commission are very specific and comprised of seven members: one member from each congressional district. Oregon now has

six congressional districts (not five) and statutory language does not match with current statutes. This could occur in the short session, though not effective till Jan 1 2023.

- Department budget is healthy and sales continued strong through 2021.
- The new Habitat Division was approved, and Sarah Reif will be the director.
- Hopeful that the trajectory for 2022 is favorable for reopening the department to the public.

A&H Program and Budget Report

Travis Schultz, A&H State Coordinator

Travis presented the A&H budget to the Board. The budget files are located in the Board packet materials and can be viewed at the following link:

<https://www.dfw.state.or.us/lands/AH/minutes/2022/January/index.asp>

Discussion followed on the current budget, allocations, forecasts, enforcement, and individual projects.

A&H Coordinator Report

Travis Schultz, A&H State Coordinator

Travis thanked Craig for his service to the board and hopes to do a recognition at the board meeting in LaGrande in April. For clarification, Travis noted that if there is an emergency meeting between now and March, Craig will still be the Chair until a new Chair is appointed. A news release has gone out announcing board openings.

Heppner Regulated Hunt Area: A large portion of the hunt area has recently sold. The new landowner does not wish to remain in RHA so the area on map will be closed for public access for 2020 hunting season and beyond. Local district personnel posting changes and a news release went out. Those who purchased tags for this unit will receive notification of the change with a mailing. Amendments to the rules to reduce the size of the hunting area were approved at the January 14, 2022 Commission meeting. This reduces spending by approximately \$54,000 per year.

2022 Auction Protocol and Update

Travis Schultz, A&H State Coordinator

2022 Auction Events Board Member Schedule

Travis reviewed the 2022 Auction Events Board Member schedule. He is working on updates to the schedule and will get back to the board with agreements and notices in case there are any date changes. Two auction events still need representatives, Willie will cover the OBH event on March 12 and Candy will do the OHA State auction on May 14.

Travis reviewed auction protocols with the Board members including the auction announcements, bid sheets, and procedures. One of the more important is successful bidders must notify department immediately upon conclusion of auction and provide required information. If they fail to do so, tag will go the alternate bidder.

Craig commented that the auctioneer should be made aware of the bidding requirements and that in the past a video has been provided. Candy said she would be happy to do a video.

Amy commented that when she goes to an auction, she talks to the auctioneer ahead of time to see if he can slow things down a bit when they get to the tag auction (recognizing that there are people bidding in person, by phone, volunteers from organizations, etc.)

OSP Enforcement Update

Craig Heuberger, OSP

Office Heuberger gave a report from Oregon State Police Fish & Wildlife Division Travel Management Area Enforcement. Transitioned to using full time Fish and Wildlife troopers instead of retirees. This decision was made by OSP Superintendent and Command Staff to provide a more sustainable, long-term model and reduce strain on resources, both vehicle fleet and office training facilities. The current Inter-Agency Agreement runs through June 30, 2023 with total funding of \$853,510. As stands OSP is projected to come in under budget for the enforcement. Craig discussed how hours are allocated, TMA enforcement statistics, and new enforcement tools/resources. Two video links were shared with the board to watch at their convenience Wildlife Enforcement Decoy (WED) operation conducted within the Willamette Private Lands project <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yPXqsTTAGzI> and a camera mounted on OSP aircraft that will be a great benefit and enhance enforcement patrols of the TMAs for years to come.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YU3VSkArdXc>

Break: 10:01 am; readjourned at 10:15 a.m.

Public Comment:

Vic Coggins, Enterprise Oregon, Retired District Wildlife Biologist and OHA Director. Vic commented on the Manulife Forest Management Project. He provided history of the area, from pre-Boise-Cascade to Manulife. Boise-Cascade opened the area to public hunting and established a road management program. This was back-country type hunting on industrial forest. Under the previous project an area was set to day use and fee camping that had traditionally allowed pack in camping. Vic felt this is not popular with the people that hunt there. For the amount of money ODFW pays for access it should be open more in line with traditional uses, everyone should be treated equally during hunt season. Vic also pointed out only about 20% of Sled Springs unit is public land and if left the access program it could lead to a major cut in tag numbers.

Project Proposals:

2022-01 Manulife Forest Management Access Area of NE Oregon

Joe Justice, Manulife, Jon Paustian

Joe Justice introduced himself as the regional manager working out of LaGrande for Manulife. Joe emphasized what a valuable project and partnership this is with Access & Habitat, providing year-round access to hunters to over 250,000 acres of private timberlands for big game, upland game birds and predators.

Jon Paustian, NE Regional A&H Coordinator, added this has been a 45+ year relationship with project area. Jon gave some history of the partnership and emphasized the strong approach to timber management, hunting, general recreational use and return to local economies for grazing opportunities, mushroom gathering and firewood. He said another important factor is the ability to limit motorized use in these areas to improve habitat and hold wildlife out of ag fields.

Discussion followed with questions from board members with most of the discussion focusing on the area's importance to hunters, non-timber revenue, fee camping, and day use only areas. Non-timber revenue sources are becoming more significant for the company. Manulife generates revenue through a variety of ways, including easements and grazing and continues to look at different opportunities for recreation.

Camping was one of the options that Manulife tried, in order to make it viable the company needed to limit the area to day-use only. Many Board members were concerned with the signs posted to have vehicles towed after sunset interfering with hunters ability to use the area and pack out game. Board members felt this was creating an additional layer of exclusivity and not providing equity to the hunting/recreation community, in addition to potentially precedent setting. When asked what is keeping this from being applied to all lands under this proposal, Joe Justice replied nothing is keeping it from being applied to all Manulife lands. Willie Bronson felt this is not clearly identified and the department needs to reserve the right to review any expansion of fee camping and day use as it could change what the benefit is to the public.

Morgan Olsen said that he is acutely aware of growing revenue streams and profit margins with the timber industry. He asked if Manulife would be willing to an increase of \$1.25 per acre to remove the paid fee camping option from the proposal?

Joe Justice noted Manulife has a small number of cabins that they have historically rented out and did not want those include as fee camping. With that clarification, Manulife was willing to remove the option of fee camping and day use areas for an increased payment of \$1.25 an acre for the 250,000 acres. The grant amount would be \$925,00 with 90% coming Open Fields funds. The final year's payment would increase from \$75,000 to \$93,750. The payment would be funded by A&H.

Board members are concerned other landowners will ask for the same \$1.25 an acre increase. Willie Bronson desires the agreement prohibit Manulife from unilaterally adding restrictions on hunters utilizing the access area.

Motion:

Morgan Olson moved to approve the Manulife Forest Management Access Area project with the clarification that the annual payment will be increased to \$1.25 per acre for the proposed 250,000 acres, which increases the project total to \$937,500; further, the proposed project is open to dispersed camping and the landowner shall not charge a fee for any camping on the access area, the landowner shall not allow or issue any special permits for motorized access

in the access area for recreational purposes, and no additional access area rules or restrictions can be developed without ODFW approval.

The motion was seconded by John Breese. Motion carried 5-1.

Willie Bronson voted No as he felt that the increased payment was precedent setting and potentially not sustainable for the A&H program.

2022-02 Lincoln County Forest Deputy

Requested Funds: \$175,000

David Stoppel, NW Regional Council

David introduced the project, that started funding a forest deputy across Lincoln County in the mid-1990's. This program provides law enforcement on private timberlands to prevent illegal dumping and other violations so that the landowners are willing to keep their lands open, free of charge, for public access. In addition, the deputy coordinates cleanup activities as needed. Access and Habitat funds are approximately 20% of the total budget, with 16 other contributing landowners.

Paul Seitz, manager for Lincoln County group, gave a slide show and overview of the program regarding the grant and updates to acreage involved. Due to the increase of abandoned vehicles on landowner properties and the cost for clean-up an additional \$5,000 is being requested for this year to help mitigate some of these costs. The actual acres provided by this grant is 107,791.

Candy Yow made a motion to approve the Lincoln County Forest Enforcement Deputy Program proposal. Willie Bronson seconded the motion.

After discussion, Craig Ely asked that Candy Yow withdraw her motion and Willie Bronson withdraw the second to outline the intent of the motion more clearly. After they withdrew the original motion, Candy Yow made the following motion:

Motion:

Candy Yow moved to approve the Lincoln County Forest Enforcement Deputy Program proposal seconded the motion with the noted changes of modifying acreage to 107,791 acres. Willie Bronson seconded the motion. Motion carried 6-0.

Regional Coordinators Report

Andrew Walch, Deschutes Regional Coordinator

- Grandview emergency fire seeding in the Metolius WMU was performed in early January and went well. The project led to some coordination with the USFS Crooked River National Grasslands, and they ended up seeding neighboring lands and fire lines similarly.
- The Clover flat emergency fire seeding is on track, the seed was finally delivered this week after some shipping delays. Rangeland drills are on-site, and conditions should be good to get seed in the ground this week.

- Aspen Valley habitat work is being completed, and payments being made as part of the open fields project.
- I was contacted by Columbia Land Trust regarding the Larch Cr project that the A&H Board approved in 2018. A&H was contributing \$200,000 towards the \$3.4mil purchase price for a 1,945-acre piece of land in the White River WMU bordering the White River Wildlife Area. The purchase was halted due to external issues in 2020, so the A&H money was never utilized, and the contract was cancelled. The Land Trust is now pursuing reviving the project and may be coming with another proposal to the A&H Board at some point.
- Staffing: Hoping to have a full staff shortly.

Tom Segal:

- Due to an early fall green up, the annual grass control projects approved this summer will be postponed until Fall 2022.
- Malheur Watershed will have 5-6 renewal projects for the April meeting.

Jon Paustian, Northeast Regional Coordinator

- Exciting news relating to the Minam River Wildlife Area acquisition. We successfully closed on the Phase I purchase around Thanksgiving. We are continuing to work on the Phase II portion of the project. Phase II is slated to close in late 2023.
- I have spent considerable time over the past several months developing and negotiating the proposed Manulife grant application.
- I am developing several new access area applications that will go in front of the Board at the April Board meeting. I also have one renewal application.
- We have had a tough couple of weeks with extreme winter conditions. Heavy snow loads with a record low of -20F recorded in La Grande around New Year's Day. There has been up- kick in big game damage associated with the tougher winter conditions.
- We are closely monitoring deer and elk body conditions as condition assessments indicate that elk are in extremely poor body condition- most likely attributed to the extreme drought conditions from this summer.

Dylan Edwards, Southwest Regional Coordinator

- Taking applications for two vacant hunter rep positions on the SW Council; will bring recommendations to the board in April.
- Working on the Territorial Youth hunt application. Giustina Resources would like to renew the project, and add an elk opportunity to the project as well. We are excited to bring the project to the board in April.
- C2 youth deer hunts are wrapped up. Still waiting on a couple hunter reviews, but a couple nice blacktails were harvested. Abnormal amounts of snow made travel a challenge, but it also benefitted hunters once on the Ranch.
- The C2 youth turkey hunt drawing will be opening on February 1st. There will be six two-day hunts offered (one day guided, and one day self-guided).
- Planning habitat projects for my habitat program (PR) in FY22-23. Hoping it will be another good year of enhancing deer and elk winter ground (primarily).

David Stoppel, Northwest Regional Coordinator

- Currently filling a technician vacancy on my Habitat Crew and potentially my assistant biologist this summer as the biologist anticipates leaving the agency.
- Hiring a seasonal intern for ten weeks. We will give them experience working on a state wildlife area, performing habitat restoration on public and private land through ODFW and the FWS Partner's Program. We also will have them work on our Good Neighbor Agreement projects with USFS in the Cascade Range.
- Potential habitat project with Starker Forest in the Coast Range. Starker has identified a meadow that is not suited for growing trees, and they want to make better wildlife forage grow on the site. Starker has some funding, OHA has offered funding, and I have offered A&H habitat funds as well, there will be plenty of partners to make this a success.

David Nuzum, Northwest Regional Coordinator

- Wrapped up North Coast TMA operations for the season back in December, with the high-level stats for contacts and violations being given by Lt. Heuberger earlier. I haven't received a breakdown of the violation types, contacts/cites by landowner or any narrative account yet.
- I pulled the traffic counters from around the Wilson Unit portion of the TMA and worked out the hunter days from the counts, with some actual stats for archery season as September was rainy and cooperators allowed some rare access during the month. Final counts for the four access points were between 2550 and 3550 hunter days depending on which expansion you use for hunters per vehicle. This represents just the trips at these four access points, and I have not estimated total use of cooperators' lands across the entire WMU.
- Tillamook and Astoria OSP offices appear to be fully staffed currently, which was a big help.

ADJOURNMENT:

Craig Ely noted that it is unfortunate that the Board has not been able to meet in person, but hopefully will be able to meet in LaGrande in April. He thanked the board and said it has been great working with everyone. Kevin Blakely thanked Craig for his service on the board and the friendship he shares openly with everyone he interacts with. Travis thanked Craig for all he has accomplished in his eight years on the board.

Chair Craig Ely adjourned the meeting at 12:35.