Access and Habitat Board Meeting Minutes

July 13, 2025
Salem, Oregon

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

Notice of these meetings had been published through Oregon Transparency Website and ODFW Website. https://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:

A&H Board	**ODFW Staff**	**Public**
Nic Callero- Chair	Travis Schultz	Marcus Gores, ORWSF
Ron Borisch - Landowner rep	Michael Hochspeier	Bryan Cook, OHA
John Dehler III - Landowner Rep	Brian Wolfer	Brian Andrews, OHA
Jeff McNerney - Landowner Rep		Wayne Endicott, OBH
Morgan Olson - Hunter Rep	**Regional Coordinators**	Dan Beraldo, RMEF, Virtual
Truman Stone - Hunter Rep	Ryan Battleson	Cory Toombs, RMEF, Virtual
	David Stroppel	Candy Yow, Oregon MDF
Absent:	Jon Paustian	Krista Modlin, NWTF, Virtual
	Landon Hardt, Absent	John Cooper, NWTF, Virtual
	Jessica Wilkes, Absent	
		Roy Elicker, NW Regional Board member
		Kevin Brown, Regional Manager Lewis &Clark Timber
		Whitney Johnson, Pacific NW land use Manager Nuveen Natural Capital, LLC

Meeting

On Monday, July 13, 2026, at 8:05 a.m. Nic Callero opened the meeting with opening remarks as the new Chair of the Access & Habitat Board.

Meeting Minutes Review

April 13, 2026

John Dehler moved to approve the meeting minutes with corrections and allowing for additional edits for grammar and punctuation. The motion was seconded by Morgan Olson. The motion was approved unanimously with six (6) in favor Borisch, Callero, Dehler McNerney, Olson and Stone.

The minutes 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/2026/July/web%20draft%20April_AH%20Meeting%20Minutes.pdf

Board Member Reports

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Ron Borisch, Landowner Representative

Ron Borisch reported ongoing work to open roads across the Willamette National Forest, BLM lands, and Department of Forestry properties. His team recently constructed a fire-truck pump pond near Mill City, which is expected to support both firefighting needs and wildlife in the post-fire landscape. He noted that local streams are drying quickly this time of year due to reduced vegetation following recent fires.

Ron reminded members to refer to the OFIC landowner access spreadsheets, especially in light of recent landowner and hunt boundary changes. He emphasized that the tool is highly useful and regularly updated by his organization.

He also reported that a board meeting is scheduled for the following day to review and discuss urban IFPL levels within the Clackamas and Marion Fire Protection Associations. Current conditions are at Level 1, while Linn County, Lane County, and other surrounding areas are already at Level 2, which includes additional fire restrictions.

Ron shared that he and Morgan participated in a fish reduction program in Kodiak, Alaska last week. The trip was successful, and his son caught the largest halibut at 150 pounds.

Truman Stone, Hunter Representative

Turman Stone reported limited activity this period due to significant work commitments. While attending a conference in Southern Oregon, he attempted to meet with Ryan for a turkey hunting opportunity. This plan was disrupted after discovering a substantial transmission fluid leak following the first afternoon in the field. The leak was caused by an improperly installed transmission pan gasket from recent preventive maintenance. Repairs required several days, resulting in the loss of most of his turkey season.

Aside from this vehicle issue, Turman noted that his workload has been unusually heavy, leaving little additional activity to report for the period.

John Dehler III, Landowner Representative

John Dehler III reported significant drought conditions across Central Oregon. He noted that current fire danger remains high, leaving landowners and managers on alert and hoping to avoid any new fire starts. No additional updates were provided for this reporting period.

Jeff McNerney, Landowner Representative

Jeff provided an update on current conditions in the North section of Hood River County. Water availability remains a concern, though irrigation has been reduced by approximately 25% with no significant issues at this time. Harvest activities began on Monday, and overall yields are lighter due to spring frost impacts on cherries and pears. Blueberries are performing well, and pear harvest is expected in about one month.

Increased bear activity has resulted in notable damage within cherry orchards, particularly due to a light cherry crop. Bears are accessing orchards by going through, under, or over game fencing and are breaking branches while feeding. In a 70-acre Parkdale cherry orchard, three bears have been removed with assistance, though additional bears continue to enter the area. Nearby growers have also removed bears. Bear-related branch damage typically begins in July. Jeff noted that a hunting season that starts prior to August 1 could help address crop damage in affected orchards.

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He also reported increasing tourism in Hood River County, leading to greater pressure on forested areas from recreational users such as mountain bikers, hikers, and off-road vehicle operators. Fire risk continues to be a significant concern.

Jeff concluded by noting this was their final meeting, expressing appreciation for the board, biologists, and staff, and acknowledging the positive experience serving in the role.

Morgan Olson, Hunter Representative

Morgan Olson reported that following the previous meeting, he participated in a fence project in the Elkhorn Wildlife Area, coordinated with a local union and the Wallowa County chapter of OHA. He noted the project was successful and marked the first local effort of this type. Youth trap-shooting teams participated, and the event was well received. John Paustian provided lunch for volunteers, and Morgan expressed interest in pursuing additional similar projects as opportunities arise.

He also shared that several scholarships were awarded through funds raised at a local event. These included scholarships for graduating high-school seniors as well as students attending Eastern Oregon University, with support from the EOU Trap Team.

Morgan reported ongoing discussions related to IP 28 and upcoming messaging efforts at both the organizational level (OHA and BHA) and within the local agricultural community, including ranchers and farmers.

He noted that the Grande Ronde Model Watershed continues evaluating new projects while advancing current work. Conditions remain dry, and he expressed hope that catastrophic fire events can be avoided.

Morgan also mentioned active discussions concerning Manulife's recent land management changes. Locally, he has observed numerous fawns and calves in his area.

Nic Callero, Chair

Nic Callero reported that organizational workload remains high following the conclusion of legislative sessions. His team is beginning to plan for next year, identifying priorities across the Intermountain West. A major focus continues to be securing funding for wildlife and wildlife-conservation efforts and working with state wildlife agencies to explore opportunities to increase financial support across the region.

Nic highlighted growing concern regarding the rapid expansion of data centers in the Intermountain West, noting that this issue is becoming increasingly significant for communities and habitat. His organization is assessing how best to engage in these discussions to ensure wildlife considerations are addressed, including appropriate siting, consultation with wildlife agencies, and potential opportunities for habitat or conservation funding associated with future projects.

Outside of work, Nic mentioned a busy travel schedule supporting his nine-year-old's soccer activities.

Public Comments

No public comment.

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Access & Habitat A&H Coordinator Reports

Travis Schultz provided an overview of upcoming projects, current obligations, and account balances. He noted that all projects recommended for funding at the January Commission meeting received approval. He also highlighted recent adjustments to contracting delegation procedures.

Travis summarized ODFW's NRCS VPA-HIP funding request, explaining that the agency applied for $3 million. Of that amount, $750,000 would support habitat work tied to public access, and $300,000 would fund technical assistance staffing. The proposed project would begin June 1, 2027, allowing a full three-year work window prior to the 2027 hunting season. He outlined four priority areas for the project: large private forestlands, Columbia Basin access, expanded statewide access opportunities, and habitat improvements within access areas. Travis noted required outreach to WRE and WRP landowners and explained that funding would support two regional coordinators—one in the Columbia Basin and one on the west side—along with seasonal assistance from Springfield and Adair staff for access-area posting and setup. He reported that Oregon NRCS will conduct the initial application review and forward it to National NRCS if recommended.

Budget:

A&H Budget Report

Travis Schultz 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/2026/July/Web%20Budget%20charts.pdf

Auction and Raffle Update

Travis Schultz A&H Coordinator

Travis Schultz presented the A&H Auction and Raffle updates on annual auction performance, noting that elk auctions performed well, with only one value falling below previous records. ODFW came within $64,000 of setting a new auction tag sales record, finishing in second place. A strong outcome that still exceeded 2024 revenues by $235,000, the third-best year on record.

Travis reported that deer auction revenues totaled $492,000, which was lower than last year but remained significantly higher than past benchmarks, including the 2020 total of all A&H auctions at $437,000. He noted that the combination tag auction was also down but still sold for twice the amount it brought in 2020. Average deer tag values decreased by $14,500, while average elk tag values increased by $11,000.

The Auction and Raffle Update are located in the Board packet materials and can be viewed at the following link:
https://www.dfw.state.or.us/lands/AH/minutes/2026/July/Individuals%20in%20raffle.pdf

2026 Auction hunt

The Access and Habitat Program received thirteen applications for A&H auction tags this year, representing six organizations. Most of the applicant organizations have previously hosted A&H auction tags.

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There are 5 deer and 5 elk tags to be allocated in 9 hunts for auction:

- 1 Combination Hunt composed of 1 deer and 1 elk tag
- 4 Statewide Deer Hunts
- 4 Statewide Elk Hunts

The representatives for the potential auction host organization introduced themselves and their organization to the Board describing the goals of the organization and how the auction funds they receive will be spent.

Organizations

- Mule Deer Foundation
- Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation
- National Wild Turkey Federation
- Oregon Bow Hunters
- Oregon Hunters Association
- Oregon Wild Sheep Foundation

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Host Organization Applications for the 2027 Oregon Big Game Auction Tags

Organization	Chapter	1st Choice	2nd Choice	Event Date	Event Location	2027 Tag Awarded
Oregon Bow Hunters	State	Combo	Deer	2027-01-23	Linn Co. Expo Center	Combo
Wild Sheep Foundation	National	Bighorn Sh	Pronghorn	2/3/2027 *(Wed 3 -Sat 6)	Peppermill Resort and Casino	Bighorn Sheep
National Wild Turkey Federation	Baker	Deer	Elk	2027-02-06	Elks Lodge Baker City, OR	Pronghorn
Mule Deer foundation	National	Combo	Deer	2/11/2027 * (Thur 11- Sun	Salt Palace Convention Center	Deer
National Wild Turkey Federation	Coos Bay	Elk	Deer	2027-02-27	Ko-Kwel Casino North Bend, OR	
Oregon Hunters Association	Pioneer	Combo	Elk	2027-03-06	Mt Angel Community	Elk
Oregon Hunters Association	Yamhill	Elk	Deer	2027-03-13	Yamhill Co. Fairgrounds	Elk
Mule Deer foundation	State	Deer	Elk	2027-03-13	The Barn at Countryside	Deer
National Wild Turkey Federation	Ochoco	Elk	Deer	2027-03-20	Carey Foster Hall-Crook Co. Fairgrounds	Elk
Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation	North Central	Combo	Deer	2027-03-30	On-Line	Deer
Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation	Newport Chapter	Combo	Deer	2027-03-30	On-Line	Elk
Oregon Hunters Association	Umpqua	Elk	Deer	2027-04-03	Seven Feathers Casino	
Wild Sheep Foundation	State	Elk	Rocky Mt. Goat	2027-04-17	Riverhouse Lodge Bend, OR	Rocky Mt. Goat
Oregon Hunters Association	State	Deer	Elk	2027-05-01	Chinook Winds Casino	Deer
		Elk:	Full	Full	Rocky Mountain Goat	1
	Combination:		Full		Pronghorn:	1
					Bighorn Sheep	1

After the Board discussed the allocation of auctions to host organizations, Truman Stone moved to approve the allocation of A&H Auction Hunts to selected host organizations as shown in the table titled Host Organization Applications for the 2027 Oregon Big Game Auction Tags. The motion was seconded by John Dehler. The motion was approved unanimously with six (6) in favor Borisch, Callero, Dehler McNerney, Olson and Stone.

The auction applications are located in the Board packet materials and can be viewed at the following link: https://www.dfw.state.or.us/lands/AH/minutes/2026/July/2027%20Applications.pdf

Break 10:15am -10:25am

Payment Increase

Travis Schultz A&H Coordinator

The Department's Economics Team evaluated inflation since the Board approved payment rates in 2008 and identified two update options. A&H staff developed a third option between the other two. Need to approve the payment table to be used as part of the evaluation form and fee calculator used in project review.

Over several meetings in 2008, the A&H Board approved the payment table currently used to evaluate landowner payments. The Board was presented with information on the payment tables and both options provided by the department's economic team.

After the Board discussed the Payment Table Adoption, Truman Stone moved to approve the proposed payment table for use in the Payment Calculator, part of the project evaluation form. The motion was seconded by Morgan Olson. The motion was approved unanimously with six (6) in favor Borisch, Callero, Dehler McNerney, Olson and Stone.

The Payment Increase 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/2026/July/Increase%20A-H%20Payments.pdf

A&H Evaluation Form Adoption

Travis Schultz A&H Coordinator

In 2008, the A&H Board developed and approved the evaluation form currently used to assess project proposals. Aside from minor adjustments made in 2009, the form has remained unchanged since its original adoption.

This agenda item requests Board approval of the updates to the A&H project evaluation form. At the April meeting, the Board received an overview of the form's history, its traditional role in proposal review, and the issues identified in recent application cycles. Staff presented draft improvements and highlighted key questions requiring Board direction. Based on that discussion, the proposed revisions have now been refined, and staff are seeking formal Board approval to implement the updated evaluation process.

After the Board discussed the A&H Evaluation Form, Jeff McNerney moved to approve the A&H Evaluation Form as proposed by staff. The motion was seconded by Morgan Olson. The motion was approved unanimously with six (6) in favor Borisch, Callero, Dehler McNerney, Olson and Stone.

The Evaluation Form 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/2026/July/AH%20Project%20Evaluation%20%20Fee%20Calculator%20Proposed.pdf

Southwest Regional Council applications

Ryan Battleson

Ryan presented the Regional Council's recommendations for the appointment of a Landowner Representative.

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After discussion by the Board, Morgan Olson moved to appoint Lefi Tausaga as a Landowner Representative on the Southwest Regional Advisory Council. The motion was seconded by Jeff McNerney. The motion was approved unanimously with six (6) in favor of Borisch, Dehler, Callero, McNerney, Olson and Stone.

The Regional Council applications are located in the Board packet materials and can be viewed at the following link:
https://www.dfw.state.or.us/lands/AH/minutes/2026/July/Web%20SW_Regional_Council_application_Redacted.pdf

Project Review:

INSURANCE REQUIREMENT PAYMENT AMENDMENT
Travis Schultz A&H Coordinator
This agenda item proposes amending the Access & Habitat (A&H) project compensation structure to better support landowners in meeting required insurance obligations. The amendment increases the administrative insurance budget from 3,000 dollars to 20,000 dollars per year for three-years and adds an enhanced insurance-consultation payment option: $100 for working with an existing insurance agent and a new $500 option for landowners needing to secure a new agent. In addition, the amendment raises the annual maximum landowner payment from $35,000 to $50,000 to ensure that the program remains attractive and financially viable for participants who are currently near the cap.

Morgan Olson moved to amend the Insurance Requirement Payment Administrative Budget as proposed. The motion was seconded by John Dehler. The motion was approved unanimously with six (6) in favor Borisch, Callero, Dehler McNerney, Olson and Stone.

The project proposal is located in the Board packet materials and can be viewed at the following link: https://www.dfw.state.or.us/lands/AH/minutes/2026/July/AH%20Project%20Evaluation%20%20Fee%20Calculator%20Proposed.pdf

2026-14 Lewis & Clark Timberlands
David Stroppel Northwest Regional Council
Kevin Brown Regional Manager Lewis &Clark Timber
Whitney Johnson Pacific NW land use Manager Nuveen Natural Capital, LLC

Nuveen Natural Capital, LLC proposes to continue providing “Welcome to Hunt” access on 153,220 acres within the Saddle Mountain, Wilson, and Trask WMUs. The request is for $804,405 over three years ($1.75 per acre; $268,135 annually). Access will continue through a free online permit system that provides maps, rules, and operating conditions. The property is open to year-round non-motorized recreation (outside of fire season), with motorized access limited to the North Coast TMA period and to controlled cow elk hunters outside that season. The program distributes more than 7,000 free permits annually, approximately 55% for hunting.

After Board discussion on the project, Truman Stone moved to approve the Lewis and Clark Timberlands NW Access Area, as modified: The project shall be funded at a rate of $1.50 per acre in Year 1, with an increase the rate to $1.75 per acre in Years 2 and 3 contingent upon the department

securing federal funding. The motion was seconded by John Dehler. The motion was approved unanimously with six (6) in favor Borisch, Callero, Dehler McNerney, Olson and Stone.

The project proposal is located in the Board packet materials and can be viewed at the following link: https://www.dfw.state.or.us/lands/AH/minutes/2026/July/2026-14%20Nuveen%20Capital%20Access%20.pdf

2026-15 Calvin Farms Access Area

David Stroppel Northwest Regional Council

This project proposes continuing efforts to reduce goose damage on annual tetraploid ryegrass fields while maintaining public hunting access on lands that would otherwise be closed. Management responsibility for the Ken Nielsen Road property will transfer from the Springfield Wildlife District to the Fern Ridge Wildlife Area due to its proximity to the wildlife area. The project is structured as a one-year agreement to allow staff to assess workload and management needs. While most lands previously enrolled under the Willamette Valley Open Fields project received minimal use and will not continue, the Ken Nielsen Road property has consistently experienced relatively high hunter use. Renewal of this access agreement will support ongoing damage mitigation and provide continued hunting opportunity in a high-demand area.

Morgan Olson moved to approve the 2026-15 Calvin Farms Access Area project as proposed. The motion was seconded by Jeff McNerney. The motion was approved unanimously with Five (5) in favor Callero, Dehler McNerney, Olson and Stone. Ron Borisch needed to step out of the room during vote but expressed his support of the project.

The project proposal is located in the Board packet materials and can be viewed at the following link: https://www.dfw.state.or.us/lands/AH/minutes/2026/July/Calvin%20Farms%20Open%20Fields%202026.pdf

2026-16 Divide Ridge Access Area

Jon Paustian Northeast Regional Council

This project proposes renewing a 5-year "Welcome to Hunt" access agreement with Joyce Carlson and Jerry and Karen Carlson to provide public hunting access on 1,440 acres within the Imnaha Wildlife Management Unit at a rate of $2.40 per acre. The Divide Ridge Access Area contains important forest and meadow habitats that support big game year-round and serve as key winter range. Private-land access within the Imnaha WMU is limited, making this partnership an important contributor to public hunting opportunity.

The project area is adjacent to USFS lands, creating a larger block of accessible habitat where game may be displaced from surrounding lands. The Carlson and Gover families have been long-standing A&H partners, and the Divide Ridge Access Area has consistently received high public use through previous projects (2016-08 and 2021-25). Renewal of this agreement will maintain an established access corridor, support strong private-landowner partnerships, and continue providing high-value hunting access in an area of high demand.

Morgan Olson moved to approve the Divide Ridge Access Area project as proposed. The motion was seconded by John Dehler. The motion was approved unanimously with six (6) in favor Borisch, Callero, Dehler McNerney, Olson and Stone.

The project proposal is located in the Board packet materials and can be viewed at the following link:

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https://www.dfw.state.or.us/lands/AH/minutes/2026/July/Web%20Divide%20Ridge%20Carlson%20and%20Gover.pdf

Regional Coordinators Reports

Wildlife Division Assistant Administrator
Brian Wolfer
Brian provided guidance on political activity for Board members and employees on pending legislation. Employees must remain neutral on all pending legislation while working. Per state policy, advisory board members must remain neutral on pending legislation during meetings. There is not a limitation on an individual's political activity on their own time.

Northeast Regional Coordinator Report
Jon Paustian
Jon Paustian gave a brief coordinator report highlighting recent volunteer and habitat work, including the annual RNA Steel Corporation weekend where volunteers completed remaining fence removal and began conifer removal at Bear Creek, bringing total high-tensile fence removal just over 19 miles. He noted that the new permittee is using virtual fencing with some physical fence retained as catch points, that the landowners secured a Forest Legacy conservation easement, and that stream restoration on Bear Creek and Little Bear Creek is underway while the family currently contributes $100,000 annually to forest health work that Jon hopes to replace with grant funding. Jon also reported successful aspen enhancement work at Elkhorn Wildlife Area with 19 volunteers. Warned of the severe upcoming fire season in Eastern Oregon. Described increasing time spent on Blue Mountain Forest Plan comments, energy and aggregate proposals in core sage-grouse habitat. The ongoing Manulife access fallout, including an annual permit, no camping and displaced hunters. One of the struggles is we have a large percentage of our area that does not use smartphones, they don't use social media and they don't monitor our press releases. All those folks that feel like they have been displaced want access to Carmen and Hartfield places that are by permission properties. Had to put my foot down and say no. County Commissioners are getting engaged on their own, they are trying to navigate some of the issues.

Southwest Regional Coordinator Report
Ryan Battleson
Ryan Battleson reported that the Southwest youth deer hunt program remains very successful, with hunters drawn and being notified through a joint letter from him and district biologist Nick and myself. He noted the Southwest Council's appreciation for Giustina Resources donated LOP tag that raised $1,400 for projects. He gave brief updates on New River access. Rogue River Preserve project, and Southern Land Conservancy, where the hunter reservation system worked well and drew positive feedback. Ryan outlined ongoing insurance and access uncertainty at Mount Crest Forest after the passing of long-time owner in the northern area. Efforts to secure an MOU with Manulife and other cooperators to clarify IFPL Level 1 road access. He summarized a recent volunteer-supported fencing upgrade at Shore Creek Prairie ahead of cattle being turnout, reported new funding from the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and Oregon Wildlife Foundation for winter and summer range work. Described cautious optimism about a grant for the Lake Creek area that could begin next

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spring if approved. He closed with a brief report on a new 3,600-acre fire near Jackson, only partly contained and already affecting air quality in the Rogue Valley.

Northwest Regional Coordinator Report

David Stroppel

David Stoppel reported that since May he attended a meeting of the Association of Concerned Landowners of Lincoln County, a group of about 15 plus landowners. A&H contribute roughly $35,000 a year to fund a forest deputy, noted the Lincoln County project will expire next June and said they plan to seek a five-year renewal in January. In June we added their long-delayed batwing mower finally arrived and will be used on projects this summer. He said his Habitat Program crew in South Willamette recently met in the field with Fish and Wildlife Service Partners, Program staff, who together with his team use a shared-equipment MOU to work on about 15 projects a year, and this year aim to restore about 2,000 acres of grasslands, wetlands, and some oak savanna in the Willamette Valley, with about half to be seeded. Additional plan on 2,500 acres on public lands across six wildlife areas. He explained that near Newport they keep some fields to browse for elk and public hunting, planning to convert some of those fields to native grasses. In response to questions said district leadership is open to expanding hunting access, particularly for turkey.

Deschutes-Klamath Regional Coordinator Report

Jessica Wilkes

Trent recently took a look at Jim Meakins property where we did some of the drone seeding as a part of the emergency seeding A&H project. (Jim's property is the last property we went and visited at the end of the A&H tour) The annual grasses are pretty thick and are outcompeting a lot of those seeded species from the drone application. Jim continues to express interest in doing more habitat work out on his place and Trent is working with him to do a ground application of rejuvra to help control those annual grasses to allow the seeded species to establish.

Jim Breese is interested in renewing his A&H program to allow limited hunting access and improve habitat. I am doing a site visit with him at the end of the month to check out his property and discuss his application.

I am starting to plan our October state board meeting and am meeting with district bios later this month to discuss field tour points of interest. We will try to plan to visit past reseeding projects and Green Diamond, if there is anything specifically they want to see let me know. We are still deciding whether it will be hosted Klamath or Lakeview.

Malheur Region

Landon Hardt- Absent

Travis Schultz presented Jeff with his certificate and commemorative cup for his years of service with the A&H Board.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:34 pm by Nic Callero.

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