

August 17th, 2026

Oregon Dept. Fish & Wildlife
Attn: Travis Schultz
4034 Fairview Industrial Drive SE
Salem, OR 97302

RE: EFM FORT ROCK PROPERTY ACCESS & HABITAT AGREEMENT CANCELLATION

EFM has partnered with the Access and Habitat program (A&H) since September 2020 to provide “Welcome to Hunt” access across our 25,680-acre Fort Rock Property. During this time, EFM has received the Oregon Hunters Association’s Landowner of the Year (Corporate) award for providing hunting access, improving access infrastructure, and enhancing mule deer habitat. EFM has consistently invested funding from multiple sources to improve wildlife habitat, reduce wildfire risk, and increase recreational opportunities on the Fort Rock Property. In addition, OHA volunteers have contributed over 1,200 hours of labor to wildlife enhancement projects, demonstrating strong support from the local hunting community.

Recently, we were informed that EFM’s A&H agreement was not renewed because ODFW staff determined that continued access payments were not providing significant benefits to hunters and that the property was no longer considered the “hunting destination” it once was. We respectfully request that ODFW reconsider this decision and allow EFM to continue advancing habitat improvements that the local community clearly values and supports.

The Fort Rock Property provides important migratory and winter range habitat for mule deer and has seen increased elk presence in recent years. It is a recognized destination for shed-horn hunting in the spring and public observation of mule deer during the fall rut. As an ODFW wildlife biologist for 25 years, I conducted hunter checks during mule deer and elk seasons and performed both fall and spring mule deer herd composition counts on the property. I have first-hand knowledge of the important role the property serves as mule deer winter range. I am also aware of the long-term declines in mule deer populations across both public and private lands, which makes the work being done on the Fort Rock Property even more critical to supporting increases in mule deer numbers across the broader landscape, extending beyond our property boundaries.

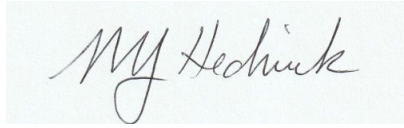
EFM has effectively used A&H funds to inventory roads, develop a georeferenced map available on the ODFW website, install road signage, and brush roads to improve access. These efforts have enhanced recreational opportunities while also reducing the risk of unintentional fire starts. EFM also identified Smoke Creek—the most significant water source and a critical wildlife habitat on the property—as a priority for protection and enhancement. A&H funds were leveraged with contributions from the Oregon Hunters Association and the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation to complete 84 acres of habitat improvement at Smoke Creek, one of several habitat projects implemented on the property in recent years.

EFM will continue to provide public access to the Fort Rock Property despite its removal from the A&H program. However, the loss of A&H affiliation limits our ability to identify EFM as a “Welcome to Hunt” partner in grant applications and to use A&H funding as matching support. This may reduce our competitiveness for future funding and constrain our ability to continue mule deer habitat improvement projects on the property.

EFM believes that the A&H program realized substantial returns from its modest investment in the Fort Rock Property, delivering meaningful benefits to wildlife, habitat, and public access. We respectfully request that ODFW reconsider its decision.

Please share this letter with the A & H State Board and East Region: Deschutes/Klamath Council members.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Mary Jo Hedrick", written in dark ink on a light blue background.

Mary Jo Hedrick
Fort Rock Property Manager