

# Oregon's Access & Habitat Board News

Fall 2006



The Oregon Legislature established the Access and Habitat Program in 1993 using a \$2 surcharge on hunting licenses. The A&H Board, composed of members of the public, identifies and recommends funding for projects that improve wildlife habitat and facilitate public hunting access on private lands.

## New upland habitat initiative underway in Malheur County

Northern Malheur County was once the top pheasant hunting spot in the state and drew large numbers of hunters to the area during pheasant season. Over the years, the area's pheasant population has declined due largely to habitat loss from changes in farming operations. Today, northern Malheur County accounts for about one-third of the total yearly pheasant harvest.

A three-year cooperative pilot project between the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife and Pheasants Forever, and partially funded by the Access and Habitat Program, is now underway in Malheur County that aims to turn the situation around by working with private landowners to develop habitat projects that will increase pheasant and other upland game bird populations. Called the Upland Habitat Initiative, the project began in July with the hiring of a Pheasants Forever habitat specialist, Brett Amdor, who is working on projects within a 50-mile radius of Ontario where most of the county's best upland habitat is located.

Pheasants Forever is a non-profit conservation organization based in Minnesota. It works to protect and enhance pheasant and upland bird populations and habitat.

Because pheasants rely on agricultural lands for habitat, modern, more efficient agricultural practices leave less cover and food, negatively affecting pheasant population levels. Some of those farming practices include increased use of pesticides and planting crops from fence line to fence line, leaving little or no edge habitat that is important to pheasants and other upland bird species.

Amdor, a native of Illinois, previously worked at an agricultural experiment station in Texas before taking the Pheasants Forever habitat specialist job in Malheur County. His position is part of a Pheasants Forever program now operating in the mid-west and eastern U.S., helping private landowners improve pheasant habitat on their properties. The A&H Program is contributing \$60,000 toward the total three-year cost of just under \$210,000. Pheasants Forever and the ODFW Upland Game Bird Fund are also contributing to the project. Eventually, the position will be self-sustaining through contract work with private landowners.

Amdor will help landowners develop and plan projects, offer

technical advice, help obtain project funding and provide equipment and manpower for projects. The ultimate goal of the Upland Habitat Initiative is to increase the pheasant population and hunting opportunities in Malheur County through habitat enhancement and sound management.

"My primary focus is to restore as much upland habitat as I can," said Amdor, who has a list of about a dozen potential habitat projects he is currently investigating. He said that he is beginning to field quite a few calls now that word of the Initiative is starting to get around.

Amdor's services are being publicized throughout the county through news releases and newsletters distributed to area landowners. ODFW, the Natural Resources Conservation Service and other agencies receive regular inquiries from landowners about upland bird habitat projects on their lands. In the past, the agencies often had to tell the caller they did not have enough staff to help. Now, with the Upland Habitat Initiative in place, those people are referred to Amdor.

With Amdor's expertise and A&H dollars, Malheur County is well on its way to restoring its status as a premier location for pheasant hunting in Oregon.



*Despite the loss of pheasant habitat over the years, many Malheur County landowners are interested in increasing pheasant and other upland bird populations on their properties. Photo by Jim Yuskavitch*

## A&H funds wildfire rehab projects

When wildfires sweep through forest or rangeland, they not only destroy wildlife habitat, but also open the door for erosion and the invasion of non-native, noxious plants.

To help minimize wildfire-caused damage, the A&H Program provides emergency grants to private landowners whose lands have been burned during the current fire season. The funds are used to reseed the burned areas to combat erosion and restore wildlife forage and cover.

For the 2006 wildfire season, the A&H Program awarded \$162,256 to six landowners to reseed 3,685 acres burned in Baker, Grant and Harney counties.



*This past seeding project in Wallowa County shows how a quick response after a wildfire can successfully restore burned-over land.*

## A&H-funded trooper receives award for catching vandal

Senior Oregon State Police Trooper Gary Chichester was awarded the Oregon Hunters Association Turn in Poachers Award in July for his investigative work that resulted in the arrest of a vandal who caused \$15,000 in damages to logging equipment in the Abiqua Basin near Silverton. The Abiqua Basin is an A&H-funded hunter access project in cooperation with volunteers from the OHA Capitol Chapter.

## More private lands offer 'welcome to hunt' opportunities

Hunters in Malheur and Harney counties will find nearly 30,000 acres of private lands open on a 'welcome to hunt' basis this season. The lands offer a variety of high-quality hunting opportunities for big game, predators, upland birds and waterfowl.

These private lands have been opened to public hunting through agreements between the landowners and the A&H Program. These agreements involve per-acre payments to the landowners in return for permitting the public to hunt on their lands. In addition to providing more private land hunting opportunities, some of these properties also allow access to adjacent public lands that are otherwise difficult to reach. The access agreements range from five to 10 years in duration.

These areas include the 400-acre Bentz Access Area east of Juntura, which offers hunting opportunities for big game and upland birds; McBride Access Area comprised of 10,100 acres of sagebrush rangeland off I-84 near Ontario; the 6,259-acre Lawen Lane Access Area near the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge, for waterfowl hunting opportunities; big game and upland bird hunting on the 2,361-acre DeGuire Access Area west of Burns; and 10,500 acres of big game and upland bird habitat on the Alvord/Kueny Access Area on the east side of Steens Mountain.

More information about hunting these areas may be obtained from local ODFW offices or the Salem headquarters.

## Calendar of Events

**December 31, 2006**

A&H Grant Application Deadline  
503-947-6087

**January 12, 2007\***

Oregon Fish and Wildlife  
Commission Meeting, Salem  
503-947-6044

**January 30, 2007**

A&H Board Meeting,  
Salem, 503-947-6087

\* Listed Commission meetings are those where A&H Project applications will be reviewed for final approval.

## Regional A&H Program Coordinators

### Northwest Region

Rick Boatner, Portland 503-621-3488  
Jim Young, Corvallis 541-757-4186

### Southwest Region

Vince Oredson, 541-826-8774  
Central Point

### High Desert Region

Larry Pecenka, Bend 541-388-6444  
Dan Gonzalez, Hines 541-573-6582

### Northeast Region

Jon Paustian, La Grande 541-963-2138

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Visit the A&H Web Site at:  
[www.dfw.state.or.us/AH/](http://www.dfw.state.or.us/AH/)



# Five New A&H Project Grants Approved

*Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission awards \$381,904 for new projects*

## 1 Mackenzie Access Project

A \$286,500 grant over 10 years was awarded to Malheur County rancher Mark Mackenzie in return for continued public hunting and other recreational access to his 9,807-acre property, and to permit the public to utilize his private roads to reach thousands of acres of adjacent Bureau of Land Management lands.

Mackenzie has traditionally permitted public access to his property. In recent years, he has experienced problems with members of the public leaving gates open that has allowed his livestock to escape and damaged 13 miles of private roads by driving on them during wet weather conditions.

The A&H Program grant funds will be used to pay for installing four cattle guards, provide the landowner with a \$2 per acre per year access payment over 10 years, and for road repair and maintenance as required. The landowner is contributing \$34,000 towards the project.

## 2 New River Aleutian Goose Project

Two years of public waterfowl hunting access to 4,280 acres of private lands and improved access to 500 acres of public lands in the New River bottoms area along the coast south of Bandon is being provided beginning this year through an agreement between the A&H Program and three property owners.

The three properties are used as staging areas for the entire population of 100,000 to 120,000 Aleutian Canada geese, which spend several weeks in the area from late March into mid-April, feeding heavily before departing on their cross-ocean migration flight to the Aleutian Islands to nest. In the process, the birds do significant damage to the landowners' pastures.

The A&H Program is providing the landowners with a \$40,000 grant to pay for part of the cost to fertilize the pastures damaged by the geese. The landowners are contributing \$84,650 towards the project.

In return for the A&H Program grant, the landowners will allow the public to hunt ducks and geese on their properties during the regular waterfowl seasons. Two landowners will permit 12 hunters on their properties on Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays. The other landowner will permit 10 hunters on Saturdays and Sundays. Hunting access will be on an advance reservation basis.

During the special South Coast Zone goose

hunt, from Feb. 24 – Mar. 10, all three properties will be open to public hunting daily to help reduce damage caused by the Aleutian Canada geese.

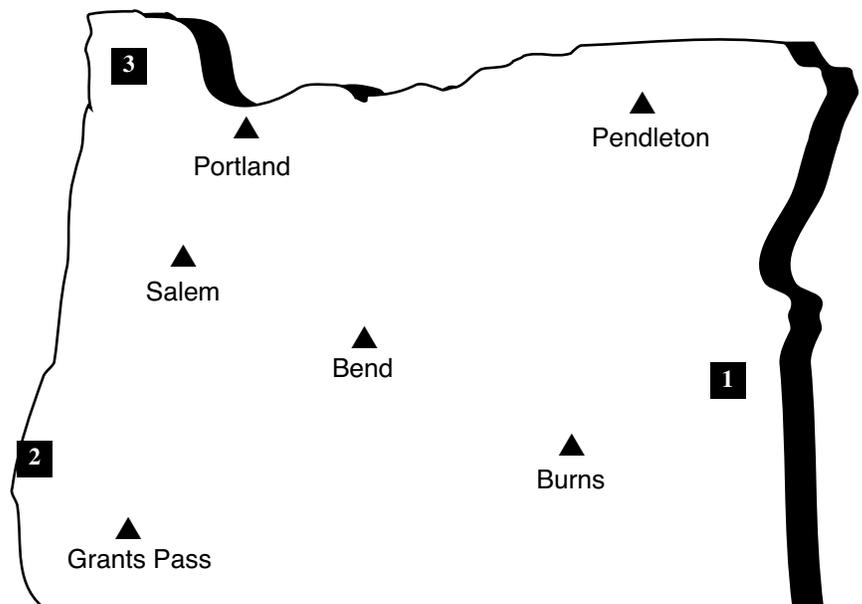
## 3 Oblack, Schmidlin and Ellis Farms Fertilization Projects

Columbia County landowners Larry Oblack, Stephen Ellis and Leonard Schmidlin have been awarded a total of \$55,404 in grants from the A&H Program to improve the quality and quantity of big game forage on their properties while making up for depredations to their hay crops.

Herds of Roosevelt elk and black-tailed deer use pastures on all three properties during the winter, causing damage to hay crops. The landowners will use the grant funds to go towards the cost of fertilizing their pastures in the spring and fall to increase crop growth. This will alleviate the crop damage caused by the deer and elk while providing them with additional forage. It will also serve as a diversionary crop to help keep the animals away from pastures and tree farms on adjacent properties. The pastures will be fertilized beginning in fall 2006 and ending in spring 2008.

In return for the grants, each landowner will allow public hunting on their properties, a total of 786 acres, on a by-permission basis. The landowners also are contributing to the cost of their fertilization projects.

## Project Locations



Access and Habitat Board  
 Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife  
 3406 Cherry Avenue, N.E.  
 Salem, OR 97303-4924



**For information on applying for an Access and Habitat Program grant contact Nick Myatt, A&H Program Coordinator, 3406 Cherry Avenue N.E., Salem, OR 97303-4924 503-947-6087**

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