



# OHA TRACKER

AUGUST 2015



TYLER DUNGANNON

## OHA joins talks on Teaters Road closure

Representatives from OHA joined a meeting on July 16 to discuss the Teaters Road closure in central Oregon, where a landowner recently closed a gravel road, denying access that hunters have used for decades to reach deer and elk hunting country in the Ochocos. The subject is a technicality in a land easement which concerns 351 feet of road. Two gates have been erected and closed, barring important access to the southern Ochoco forest.

Nineteen people were in attendance. Gallatin Public Affairs and Ed Fitch, attorney, represented the Waibel family. Groups represented around the country were the BLM, USFS, Crook County, the Warm Springs tribes, RMEF, Backcountry Hunters & Anglers, representatives from senators Merkley and Wyden, Rep. Walden and OHA members John Crafton (Redmond), Dale Conlee (Prineville), and Bill Littlefield and Gary Lewis (Bend).

Representatives for the Waibel family cited negative impacts, such as driving off-road, fence destruction, poaching, and road damage by overuse. The family said they can't protect the property without restricting access.

The theme of the meeting turned to how groups like OHA, BHA and RMEF could help the Waibel family open the gate year-round. Bill Littlefield suggested that OHA and other groups provide cameras for OSP, fund decoy operations, help with fencing, erect signage, provide mapping, build kiosks, coordinate clean-ups and repairs and assist in prosecution.

The meeting was adjourned after about 90 minutes. All seemed to agree they had an opportunity to speak and it seemed like progress was made toward a solution. If the groups proceed to more meetings we are hopeful for a resolution that will keep the gates open year-round.

—GARY LEWIS, OHA EASTERN OREGON DIRECTOR

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## Oregon legislative session ends, more fun begins

The 2015 Oregon Legislative Session is over, but the aftermath of the session has just begun in the form of bills that offer a future impact on hunting.

On the ODFW Commission front, OHA will testify on two very important issues this summer: sage grouse and wolf delisting.

### **HB 2402 Future Funding of ODFW**

This bill was introduced by the office of the Governor and it established a task force to identify and recommend potential alternative funding sources for ODFW, including sales of recreational outdoor equipment, clothing or related goods; and contributions from businesses and other organizations to support the protection and preservation of nongame wildlife and habitat.

The task force will meet this fall. OHA has established a committee to make recommendations as to who best would represent the hunting community on this task force and also on who would best represent the commercial side of hunting on this group. OHA will be making its recommendations to the Governor's office by the end of July.

### **HB 2182 Oregon Predation Plan Study**

This bill was introduced to help deal with the problem of predation of Oregon's wildlife and help establish a map of how ODFW will address all predation in the future. The bill calls for ODFW to study developing a predator management plan and to report to interim committees of the Legislative Assembly on or before Sept. 15, 2016. OHA has already been in contact with the director of the ODFW Wildlife Division to discuss this study and its development.

### **Wildlife Law Enforcement Work Group Established**

This past legislative session OHA introduced a bill that established a task force to look at the feasibility of transferring the responsibilities of the game enforcement division of OSP to ODFW. This issue was raised during the formation of the ODFW budget for 2015-2017 when it became clear that hunters were spending more and more dollars for OSP game enforcement. At that time OHA members were asking if it would be more cost effective to move the OSP game enforcement division from under OSP to under ODFW like 48 other states are doing. OHA went searching for an answer in bill form.

The work group has met once and will continue to meet throughout the summer and fall. —AL ELKINS, OHA LOBBYIST

See this week's Hunting Headlines at [www.oregonhunters.org](http://www.oregonhunters.org)

## OHA weighs in, chips in for sage grouse

The Oregon Hunters Association testified in favor of sage grouse conservation plans that include continued hunting of sage grouse on July 27 when the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission held a special meeting in Salem to consider adopting amended administrative rules for sage grouse management.

### How Hunters Help

“The hunting of sage grouse provides ODFW biologists with invaluable information only obtainable from wings collected and turned in by hunters, giving age and sex demographics, as well as nesting success, which is the primary driver of sage grouse populations,” said OHA Conservation Director Jim Akenson. “This is critical data that biologists have no other means of collecting, and the information yielded could help avoid a federal listing of the birds.”

### Conservative Controlled Seasons

Sage grouse hunting is the most tightly regulated form of upland bird hunting in the state, and managers regulate tag numbers so the harvest does not exceed 3 percent of the population in each management unit. Actual harvest is closer to 1 percent of the estimated population.

Currently, ODFW offers a conservative hunting season in 12 wildlife management units of eastern Oregon. In recent years, ODFW has authorized 840 two-bird permits in the east half of Oregon, with most of the hunting occurring on lands administered by the BLM. Each hunter drawing a permit is mailed postage-paid envelopes in which to return wings if they are successful in taking a bird.

The ODFW game bird staff has indicated that the sage grouse population is stable, and possibly increasing slightly for 2015, with a projected fall population estimate of nearly 25,000 birds.

“OHA strongly supports the conservation of greater sage grouse and their habitat,” Akenson said. “That’s why OHA supports the proposed mitigation rules to require avoidance of development impacts to core sage grouse habitat, except under specific circumstances.”

Currently, ODFW mitigation rules are effectively only recommendations to

permitting entities and not requirements for mitigating development impacts in designated core habitat for sage grouse. Core habitats are areas that encompass about one-third of Oregon’s sage grouse habitat but support more than 90 percent of the bird’s populations.

ODFW is proposing to change its rules to require mitigation actions for large-scale and other development such as aggregate mining, wind, solar, and geothermal energy plants.

The proposed administrative rules will address one of the threats to sage grouse identified by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS): the lack of regulatory certainty in protecting sage grouse habitat. That protection is key in the upcoming USFWS decision whether or not to list sage grouse as a threatened or endangered species. The USFWS is expected to make a decision by Sept. 30, 2015.



## OHA chapters donate \$13,000 to fund sage grouse research

An ongoing research project in southeast Oregon has received funding from four chapters of the Oregon Hunters Association to gather critical data and knowledge of the greater sage grouse and their habitat. The Ochoco and Yamhill chapters donated \$5,000 each, while the Emerald Valley and Rogue Valley chapters each chipped in \$1,500.

These funds will help support a PhD student of Oregon State University, technicians and the necessary equipment to complete the second phase of the Trout Creek Mountains research project.

“This unprecedented project is vital to our understanding as to how greater sage grouse move and survive in the sagebrush landscape after a catastrophic fire,” said OSU associate professor Christian Hagen, a former ODFW sage grouse program coordinator who is heading up the collaring project. “The information gained from this work will provide valuable insights for land managers in the restoration of the sagebrush system to hopefully expedite population recovery. The continued support of Oregon sportsmen and women is invaluable to forwarding the conservation of the sagebrush system.”

## OHA stresses elk issues at Blue Mountain event

OHA State Board Chair Fred Walasavage, Northeast Director Vic Coggins and Conservation Director Jim Akenson recently attended the 25th anniversary observance of the Blue Mountain Elk Initiative, where groups were allowed to present concerns. OHA cited: 1) trend of elk re-distribution from public to private land; 2) pending influence of wolves on elk re-distribution, elk numbers reduction, and the effect on hunting opportunity; 3) threat of public land base privatization, and 4) travel management decisions and elk hunting considerations.

## OUTDOOR OUTLOOK

**AUGUST 1**

Bear season opens;  
OHA Bend Chapter Crescent tree thinning  
541-330-0140;  
OHA Lincoln County Chapter Youth Day  
Shooting Skills Clinic 541-996-9984

**AUGUST 7-9**

OHA Chapter Leader Summit, Diamond Lake

**AUGUST 9**

Klamath OHA's FFA/4-H BBQ 541-331-0917

**AUGUST 14**

OHA Klamath Chapter's Gerber Reservoir  
youth antelope hunt BBQ 541-281-6518

**AUGUST 15**

Standard antelope season opens;  
Clatsop County Youth Day 503-359-3535

**AUGUST 23**

Standard antelope season closes

**AUGUST 28**

Bow tag sale deadline

**AUGUST 29**

General bow season opens

**SEPTEMBER 1**

Seasons open for forest grouse  
and W. Oregon quail