



OHA testifies on wolf and cougar management plans

OHA Conservation Director Jim Akenson gave presentations to the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission this spring regarding reviews of Oregon's wolf and cougar management plans. Akenson stated that OHA would like to address the need to establish parameters regarding the relationship between wolves and wildlife, and the insertion when necessary of hunting of wolves to protect wildlife and livestock in specific instances.

Akenson pointed out the need to establish "cougar zones" and target populations within those zones to help reduce the stress on other wildlife.

ODFW staff and OHA will continue working throughout the year on the re-writing of these two plans.

OHA Board weighs in on Owyhee proposal

The OHA Board of Directors at its May meeting approved a letter to be sent to Congress that outlined the OHA position on the Owyhee Canyonlands Monument Proposal. In part the letter stated:

"We are concerned that public involvement is not part of the process in the consideration of the proposed 2.5 million acre Owyhee National Monument. In the absence of any open public process to date, we believe it would be premature to designate such a vast 2.5-million-acre area as a national monument. We believe that it is important to manage the Owyhee region in a way that keeps the area as is — a working landscape that ensures

the traditions of hunting, fishing, ranching and adventure in the pristine canyon country remain the way they are today."

The letter went to Oregon's congressional delegation and key federal officials. (oregonhunters.org/legislative.html)

OHA airs concerns over Crater Lake designation

At its board meeting on May 21, the OHA State Board of Directors approved a letter to be sent to the Oregon Congressional Delegation addressing the 500,000-acre wilderness area as proposed by Oregon Wild. The letter in part stated:

"We greatly value the region around Crater Lake National Park as a special place with outstanding natural beauty, opportunities for multiple types of recreation, solitude, and hunting and fishing opportunities. Recently, Oregon Wild has proposed a 500,000-acre wilderness area around this park in the five National Forests that surround Crater Lake.

OHA is very concerned about proposals to establish a 500,000-acre wilderness in this area. There is a great need to actively manage our National Forests in western Oregon to treat and prevent catastrophic wildfires, and provide for timber harvest and wildlife habitat.

In the absence of any open public process to date, we believe it is premature to consider designating 500,000 acres around Crater Lake as a wilderness at this time. OHA believes that it is important to manage this area for multiple use."

The letter was sent to the entire Oregon Congressional delegation as well as Forest Supervisors around the Crater Lake area, and Cindy Rooney, President of the Umpqua Chapter of OHA, who has been instrumental in following this issue.

OHA raises reward in bighorn poaching case to \$15,550

The Oregon Hunters Association announced on May 21 that it will offer an additional \$5,000 from its Turn In Poachers (TIP) fund to increase the reward to as much as \$15,550 for information leading to whoever poached a bighorn sheep along Interstate 84 in April.

The reward — one the largest ever offered in a poaching case in Oregon — now consists of \$5,500 from OHA's TIP fund and \$1,000 from the Oregon Chapter of the Foundation for North American Wild Sheep (www.oregonfnaws.org), \$300 from OHA's Lincoln County Chapter, \$250 from the OHA Baker Chapter, and \$500 each from OHA's Clatsop County, Tioga, Columbia County, Bend, Josephine County, Yamhill County, Union County, Ochoco, Capitol, Mid-Columbia, Mid-Willamette, Klamath, Emerald Valley, Umpqua, Malheur County, Hoodview and Tualatin Valley chapters.

"OHA is outraged at this latest heinous poaching incident in Oregon," said OHA Conservation Director Jim Akenson. "As the administrator of the TIP program that annually pays more than \$13,000 to informants in poaching cases, OHA has been a leader in the fight against poaching for more than three decades."

The Oregon State Police are requesting anyone with information on this incident to contact Senior Trooper Jubit at 541-705-5330 or the TIP hotline: 1-800-452-7888. A caller may remain anonymous and still collect the reward.

For the complete story on this case, visit OHA's Conservation blog page at: <http://oha-conservation.webs.com>

See this week's Hunting Headlines at www.oregonhunters.org

Cougar management past and present 🐾

By Jim Akenson, Conservation Director 🐾

As I sat in the audience for the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission's April meeting, I listened to the second invited panel stating that cougar populations should self-regulate and that "the science" supported that notion. I had just participated in the first invited panel where OHA gave testimony alongside RMEF and two Oregon Farm Bureau representatives. I felt that my message had been clear on the need to protect "hunt-able" deer and elk populations through both general cougar seasons and targeted management actions. One Commissioner had asked me several questions on the current day potential for the targeted use of hounds to manage cougars in problem areas. I provided positive comments on expanding the use of hound dogs for targeted removal – and I felt things had gone well for our panel group's testimony.

My mind drifted back to December of 1994 and the emotional times immediately following the November vote of Measure 18. At the time I was a wildlife biologist for ODFW and in the middle of working as the field lead on two studies: the Catherine Creek Cougar Study and the Starkey Black Bear Study. Both these projects depended heavily on volunteer houndsmen for catching and collaring these two predatory big game species. In general, the houndsmen I worked with were very depressed; their lives revolved around pursuing cougars and bears with their finely tuned dogs, and they had just lost that cherished opportunity.

As biologists, we too were in turmoil, wondering how we were going to manage cougars in coordination with managing deer and elk populations when we had just lost the primary tool in our toolbox. We concluded that cougar management just took on a much more complex nature, and raised the question: was it even possible to regulate this population going forward? We talked about managing "hot spots" using government trappers, and then offering a broader harvest opportunity by creating incentives for the pool of deer and elk hunters when they went afield. We also discussed the

heightened need for Wildlife Services using the services of a few remaining "dog men" to conduct cougar removal when needed, such as with agricultural damage, pet loss, or human safety threat. In those days the statewide cougar population was estimated at 3,000, and it has now doubled in 22 years for the next estimate of 6,000 cougars in 2016. This did involve extensive promotion of incidental take by hunters, and the current day issuing of over 56,000 cougar tags.

My reflections were jolted back to the scene at hand as one of the Commissioners asked the Panel 2 invited spokesperson, "So how would you define good science; it looks to me like you are relying on just one primary reference?"

"Good science is peer-reviewed," she commented back. The Commissioner commented that her response was subjective, and that more diverse scientists were needed to comprise truly unbiased peer review. My cogs were turning, and I thought, we really need to lay out a plan for scientific methods being applied as we proceed with this 2016 plan update. Our concerns formed back in 1994 are still relevant, but we now live and operate in a different world of social considerations and scientific scrutiny.

In concluding this session of the commission meeting, the Chair asked the staff biologists responsible for updating the Cougar Management Plan to take a look at my suggestions for a "tiered approach" to determining target area consideration and implementation.

This tiered approach would involve separating out targeted cougar removal into two different types: 1) those that relate to agricultural damage, pet loss, and human safety from those that deal with 2) wildlife population enhancement and protection. Ideally, the payment on these would also be from different sources. Of course the primary concern to sportsmen are the tier 2 management actions, which evaluate the need for doing increased removal in a given area to help depressed game populations on herds with serious issues of calf, fawn, lamb, or kid recruitment, or to protect sensitive re-establishment efforts of big-horns, pronghorns, moose or other big game species. Part of this evaluation of need should include a checklist of criteria for doing the action in the first place, and

another checklist to assess the target effort effectiveness. The science would be applied through a three-step process: 1) good game census data to substantiate the action; 2) define, as clearly as possible, the area of action – which might just be part of a management unit; and 3) apply the follow-up efforts needed to statistically support action results.

OHA is fortunate to participate in the Cougar Plan review process. It feels amazingly *deja vu* like, however, after all these years we may be at a point of generating an effective equation to enhance our big-game hunting opportunities – let's hope so!



Got a question about the management of Oregon's wildlife and habitat? You can ask OHA's conservation director at: <http://oha-conservation.webs.com>

OUTDOOR OUTLOOK

MAY 31

Turkey, spring bear seasons close

JUNE 4

OHA Bend Family Day 541-480-7323;
OHA Josephine County Youth Outdoor Day
541-846-7437

JUNE 10-12

OHA Hoodview White River weekend
project 503-358-7821;
OHA Pioneer Chapter family campout
weekend 503-710-1233

JUNE 17-18

OHA Capitol Chapter Aspen Project
503-399-1234

JUNE 17-19

OHA Tioga Chapter youth outdoor ed
family camp weekend 541-267-2577

JUNE 18

OHA Klamath Youth Day 541-591-2452

JUNE 20

Controlled hunt results available

JUNE 24-26

Multi-chapter Ochocos aspen/guzzler
weekend project 541-647-0424,
503-769-6099

JUNE 25

OHA Lake County Youth Day 530-640-3368