

OHA TRACKER



UNION COUNTY/JIM WARD

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Hunting bills await hearings

A number of hunting-related bills – the good, the bad, and the ugly – are still in committees and awaiting hearings. One OHA bill, which would expand the eligible age of youths in the Mentored Youth Hunter Program to age 17 to allow busy high school students to be mentored, had been assigned a hearing as of Feb. 20.

HB 2107 – Cougar Hunting with Dogs
This is an OHA cougar bill that OHA asked the House Interim Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources to introduce this session. HB 2107 would allow a county to exempt itself from the banning of the use of dogs to hunt or pursue cougars if voters approve a county measure proposed by initiative petition or referred to the people by the governing body of the county.

Bill Status: The bill is in the House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee waiting to be scheduled for a hearing.

HB 2589 & SB 371

These bills essentially are the same as HB 2107.

SB 458 – Cougar/Dog Controlled Hunt Program

The bill requires the Commission to adopt a controlled hunt program for hunting cougars with dogs.

Bill Status: The bill is in the Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee waiting to be scheduled for a hearing.

HB 2566 – Mentor Program Expansion

This is an OHA bill. The bill will extend

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the youth mentor program through age 17 to allow busy high school students to be mentored in the current program.
Bill Status: The bill has been scheduled for a hearing on March 7 before the House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee.

SB 6 – Modifies Trap Requirements

SB 6 would modify trap check requirements by changing the current 48-hour trap check period to every 24 hours. It would also require signage be posted within five feet of any trap set on public land that warns the public of the existence and location of the trap and the danger to human and animal safety posed by the trap.

Bill Status: This bill was scheduled for a hearing in early January but was abruptly pulled off the agenda. The bill has not been rescheduled for a hearing as of this writing. OHA is opposed to the bill.

SB 372 – Wildlife Salvage Permits

SB 372 requires the Fish and Wildlife Commission to adopt rules for issuance of wildlife salvage permits to salvage deer or elk accidentally killed as result of vehicle collision.

Bill Status: A hearing was held on the bill in early January. There are several concerns raised about the bill and amendments may be drafted to ensure that the meat would be for human consumption only and that the Oregon Department of Agriculture, the Oregon Department of

Fish and Wildlife and the Oregon State Police are not required to certify the meat. The bill has not been rescheduled for a hearing as of this writing.

OHA is monitoring this bill.

HB 2634 - Disabilities under Wildlife Laws

The bill redefines the disabilities definition under the wildlife laws and establishes a new disabilities permit.

Bill Status: The bill had a hearing in February. One of the issues raised at the hearing on the bill was how this bill would be implemented and what the impact on ODFW would be. The bill has not been scheduled for another hearing as of this writing. OHA has serious concerns about this bill as written.

HB 2365 – Task Force on Transfer of Federal Land

This bill establishes a Task Force on the Transfer of Federal Land Ownership in Oregon.

Bill Status: This bill had a hearing in mid-February. The bill generated a great deal of interest, but not a great deal of support. The chair of the committee that heard the bill, Rep. Brian Clem (D-Salem), has since said that the bill is dead.

OHA is opposed to the bill.

HB 2487 – Deer or Elk Tag Guarantee for Pioneers over 75

The bill would require the Commission to, as part of the current preference point system for controlled hunt permits, guarantee issuance of one deer or elk controlled hunt permit to any applicant who is 75 years of age or older and has a resident annual pioneer license.

Bill Status: The bill has not been scheduled for a hearing.

—AL ELKINS, OHA LOBBYIST

Hunters locked out of Chehalem Ridge

The February public open house for Metro's new Chehalem Ridge Park in Yamhill County left hunters out of the plans. Those who have hunted this formerly private property feel the loss of hunter access and opportunity.

This one hit home for Bryan Cook, OHA Yamhill Chapter President. Bryan attended the standing-room-only roll-out of the draft plan as dozens of neighbors, bicyclists, hikers, birdwatchers and other recreation interests sat through a presentation, viewed maps and talked with Metro Parks staff leaders. A no-hunting policy on Metro lands began with their purchase of mostly urban properties over two decades ago.

The 1,200-acre parcel just south of Forest Grove is the showcase for the draft plan to be issued for additional public review in the summer of 2107. Construction of multi-user trails and trailheads may begin as early as summer 2019, and opening possibly in 2020. The parcel is closed currently for public access during vegetation management activities, including tree thinning and clearing.

A second Metro effort is occurring this spring to review the land use codes for all Metro properties. OHA will be a stakeholder in that process. We held a meeting with Metro staff in November expressing our concerns on removing the hunting option on this property. That meeting followed a hearing before the House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee where representatives of OHA and Metro appeared to testify on the no hunting policy on Metro lands.

OHA got involved in the process in fall 2106. Draft planning and public engagement on the draft was nearly complete at that time. We took a different approach to our involvement by directly engaging Metro outside the normal public process. —*KEN MCCALL, OHA RESOURCE DIRECTOR*

OHA responds to help eastern Oregon deer

Many parts of eastern Oregon have experienced a hard winter with persistent snow cover and below-average temperatures. In portions of Wallowa, Union, and especially Baker and Malheur counties, the deep snow – up to three feet in valleys and uplands – held tight from early December well into February. 

OHA's state board responded by allocating up to \$20,000 from the OHA Wildlife Super Fund generously supported by OHA members, to provide relief where possible. We ran into a few snags getting the program launched. First is the issue of jumping into feed programs late in the winter – and the fact that starving animals cannot easily transition back into nutritious feed. In the case where deer have been raiding haystacks, scavenging off cattle-feeding operations, or even being fed by some compassionate ranchers, there is an opportunity to help relieve the burden and save a few deer.

Through interactions with OHA chapter leaders, ODFW biologists and individual landowners, we learned of some ranchers who kept deer herds from starving. We are in the process of repaying these people (in hay) for their generosity and concern for mule deer.

The biggest help for deer came the second week of February with an unexpected Chinook wind. These warm winds removed snow, especially from south slopes where depths were less, but was it too late? ODFW staff will be conducting flight surveys in late February and early March, and we should have a better feel for population composition as spring begins.

One positive was a better-than-normal fall green-up last year, so deer went into this brutal winter with good fat reserves.

So, how much will this affect our hunting opportunities? Unfortunately, we do not know yet, and the mortality effect might be more focused on the fawn segment, which will be a population factor looking ahead to near future years.

We will continue to keep tabs on the situation of eastern Oregon mule deer and keep our membership informed as we approach controlled hunt deadlines – and also look to future hunting opportunities. One thing this severe winter has done is given us a “heads up” on what is needed to help our mule deer during desperate winter conditions – which we have not experienced for several years, until now.

—*JIM AKENSON, OHA CONSERVATION DIRECTOR*

DSL votes to approve Elliott Forest sale

The Department of State Lands (DSL) Board in February voted 2 to 1 to support the privatization of the Elliott State Forest and sell it to a logging company, which bid \$221 million in conjunction with Tribes and The Conservation Fund. The lone no vote was Governor Brown, with Secretary of State Dennis Richardson and State Treasurer Tobias Read both voting to accept the bid. DSL staff was then directed to move forward with negotiating the terms of the sale of the Elliott State Forest.

Brown will look at options to keep the Elliott State Forest as public state land.

Reed proposed amendments to the plan, which included an option to buy back \$25 million of the acreage for use as a possible state park or wildlife refuge. He also added a requirement to log the land under restrictive standards.

At the meeting OHA submitted a

statement that in part said: 

“The Oregon Hunters Association appreciates the opportunity to comment on the future of the Elliott State Forest in southwest Oregon. In particular, OHA is strongly in support of this property remaining in public ownership and available to hunters and a host of other recreationists in Oregon.

Historically, hunting has been an important use of the Elliott Forest, and our organization would like to see that heritage maintained. We understand that the State Land Board is evaluating ownership options for this land, which, to this date, has been managed by the Common School Trust. OHA opposes the privatization of the Elliott State Forest for fear of lost access for hunters, as well as for conservation concerns given the unique ecological condition of this forest within the broader Oregon Coast Range.