

Putting Our Green on the Ground



Stories by Jim Yuskavitch

“OHA has been a tremendous resource on wildlife projects. They have some great people.”
—Tod Lum,
ODFW biologist

Members of the Oregon Hunters Association all over Oregon got their green thumbs dirty in wildlife habitat projects this spring and summer.

OHA chapters have been putting their hard-earned funds raised at recent banquets to work in on-the-ground projects benefiting Oregon's wildlife and sportsmen. On the statewide level, grants approved by OHA's State Board of Directors will fund major projects aimed at access and habitat management, as well as youth activities.

This special section highlights just a few of the larger scale projects conducted and funded by OHA during the late spring and early summer. OHA projects continue even during the fall and winter, so watch your chapter newsletter for opportunities to get in on some great OHA projects wherever you live and hunt in Oregon.

MICHELLE CRAFTON





OHA volunteers built and repaired guzzlers to provide water for wildlife in Oregon's most arid areas.



OHA buys drinks for state's wildlife

OHA rebuilds guzzlers destroyed in wildfire

Ten members of the Oregon Hunters Association's Lake County Chapter spent the last Saturday in May rebuilding two wildlife guzzlers that were destroyed in the Juniper Mountain Fire, which burned about 80,000 acres in 2002. The guzzlers are located in Mule Springs Valley and Juniper Draw, about 11 miles west of Juniper Mountain.

"It went really well," said Gerald Slay, OHA Lake County Chapter president. "We were able to rebuild both guzzlers within a day." In addition to the OHA volunteers, staff from the Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife also participated. The guzzlers are located on land managed by the BLM.

Wildlife guzzlers are structures designed to collect and store water for wildlife and are especially critical for animals inhabiting arid regions or during periods of drought. They consist of a flat surface or apron that collects rainwater and funnels it into storage tanks containing a basin out of which wildlife can drink.

The Juniper Mountain Fire actually burned four guzzlers. "We've gotten two

rebuilt now, so we have two more to go," said Lakeview-based ODFW district wildlife biologist Craig Foster. Foster hopes to organize another volunteer project to re-construct the other guzzlers in the near future.

According to Foster, the guzzlers provide an important additional water source for bighorn sheep, mule deer, pronghorn, chukar and a host of non-game wildlife.

OHA repairs wildlife guzzlers on Fremont-Winema National Forest

About 40 members of the Oregon Hunters Association Klamath Chapter spent the last weekend in May maintaining and repairing about 30 wildlife guzzlers on the Fremont-Winema National Forest near the Williamson River headwaters area.

Wildlife guzzlers often experience some weather damage over the course of the winter, requiring maintenance and repair in the spring when melting snow permits access.

In addition to returning later this year to make more extensive repairs on some guzzlers, chapter members are also working with the U.S. Forest Service to identify each guzzler's coordinates using the Global Position System. That information will be used to develop a map that will make it easier to locate the guzzlers in the future for maintenance and repair work.

OHA provides water for high desert wildlife

Two dozen members of the Pioneer Chapter of the Oregon Hunters Association ventured from their home territory of the northern Willamette Valley to spend a weekend in June ensuring that a group of 10 wildlife guzzlers east of Millican that provide wildlife with a permanent source of water during the dry high desert summer are in good working order. The OHA Pioneer Chapter has "adopted" this group of guzzlers and has been maintaining them under the direction of the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife for more than 10 years.



The trash dumpster was overflowing after the OHA Clatsop County Chapter's forest cleanup project.

OHA removes piles of garbage from private and state timberlands

About fifteen volunteers from the Clatsop County Chapter of the Oregon Hunters Association, along with a few members of the Saddle Mountain Archers, spent a weekend in April removing trash from local state and private forests along Highway 26, including timberlands owned by Hampton Affiliates, Longview Fibre and Weyerhaeuser.

"Most of the garbage was dumped between Highway 26 and the gates leading into the forest," said Clatsop County Chapter member Norm McLaren. "We found everything from old mattresses to worn out tires." Deeper in the forest the volunteers retrieved mainly smaller trash items such as discarded bottles and cans. One group of volunteers found a bag of used syringes.

McLaren estimates they picked up about 20 cubic yards of garbage over the course of the weekend. The dumpster they rented was so overflowing that the refuse company had to make two trips to haul it all away.

Chapter members were planning another clean-up weekend later in summer.



An OHA volunteer plants a fruit tree at a project site in central Oregon.

OHA Redmond Chapter farms for wildlife

Nearly three dozen volunteers from the Redmond Chapter of the Oregon Hunters Association spent a May weekend farming for wildlife on several agricultural plots just west of Mitchell as part of a 10-year partnership with the Bureau of Land Management to improve wildlife habitat in the area.

The work included disking and seeding 12 acres with cover crops, planting fruit trees, installing irrigation pumps and pipes, and planting winter wheat on another 12 acres. Volunteers returned regularly over the next six weeks to irrigate the crops.

"Eventually, it will produce food and cover for a variety of bird species as well as deer, elk, antelope and other wildlife," said Harold Duncan, one of three OHA Redmond Chapter members who help coordinate the project. The crops will also divert deer and elk from neighboring private agricultural lands to help reduce wildlife related damage to those properties.

The agreement, now in its second year, includes about 300 acres of agricultural lands off Burnt Ranch Road that were acquired by the Bureau of Land Management in a past land exchange. To date, the OHA Redmond Chapter has contributed \$10,000 for irrigation pumps, \$5,000 for a tractor and about \$1,400 for seed and fertilizer. Central Oregon Quail Unlimited is also involved in the partnership and has donated \$5,000, along with another \$7,000 from that organization's national office.

"It's already working," said Duncan. "We saw all kinds of elk tracks and droppings in the fields, and when I went out on Saturday I saw five antelope bedded down in the winter wheat we planted last year."



An OHA volunteer from the Umpqua Chapter works to remove dilapidated fencing from an abandoned tree plantation to allow elk herds better access to the area.

OHA improves habitat on Umpqua National Forest

Members of the Umpqua Chapter of the Oregon Hunters Association are working on several wildlife habitat improvement stewardship projects in the Umpqua National Forest while raising funds to help the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife Umpqua District purchase a new tractor to use for additional wildlife habitat enhancement projects.

"This is a three-way partnership between the Umpqua National Forest Diamond Lake Ranger District, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife and the Oregon Hunters Association," said ODFW Umpqua District wildlife biologist Tod Lum. "OHA volunteers do the work and the Forest Service pays OHA, with the money going toward the purchase of a habitat tractor."

Most recently, 13 OHA volunteers removed a quarter-mile of old fence from around an abandoned tree plantation at Brodie Creek on April 25. The fence was originally installed to keep elk away from the plantation trees. Now overgrown and dilapidated, it is a hazard to the elk herds that frequent the area.

"The elk use the meadow at the old plantation, but the fence around it makes them prone to getting tangled in it and they are more vulnerable to predation because it interferes with their escape routes," said OHA Umpqua Chapter member Marnie Allbritten, who helped coordinate the project.

Earlier this year the chapter also installed a pipe from a spring to a new pond constructed at Thorn Prairie, also located in the Umpqua National Forest Diamond Lake Ranger District, to provide a new water source for wildlife. The chapter planned to remove old fence at several additional former plantations later in the spring when melting snow makes them accessible.

The total cost for the new tractor is \$30,000. The Umpqua and Tioga chapters of the Oregon Hunters Association have donated \$7,000. In addition, the stewardship project work will bring in another \$10,000. The remaining funds will come from the ODFW Game Bird Stamp Program and the ODFW Umpqua District Office.

The new tractor, to replace an older failing one, will be used for a variety of wildlife habitat restoration and enhancement projects such as seeding abandoned logging roads to provide forage and cover for grouse and quail, invigorating the growth of shrubs used by big game by cutting them back, mowing bracken fern to encourage a greater variety of native plants to grow and tilling areas to be planted with crops beneficial to wildlife.

"OHA has been a tremendous resource on this and other wildlife projects," said Lum. "They have some great people."



OHA volunteers from the Emerald Valley Chapter planted about 150 native shrubs that will increase the amount of available forage for big game animals.

OHA enhances habitat at Lookout Point Reservoir

Elk and deer will have more to eat at Buckhead Seed Orchard in the Willamette National Forest thanks to a half-dozen volunteers from the Emerald Valley Chapter of OHA, along with U.S. Forest Service and ODFW staff, who worked this spring planting about 150 native shrubs that will increase the amount of available forage for big game animals.

The seed orchard, which is no longer operational, is located near Lookout Point Reservoir west of Oakridge. The seed orchard planting is part of an ongoing multi-year project the chapter is involved with to improve wildlife habitat in the Lookout Point Reservoir area.

The chapter buys fertilizer every other year to enhance the meadow's grass and forb growth.



OHA volunteers built fences around struggling aspen groves in June.

OHA donates funds, volunteer labor to protect aspen groves on Ochoco National Forest

The Capitol, Bend and Ochoco chapters of OHA each contributed \$1,500 and volunteer labor to protect two aspen groves in June at Quicksand Springs and Bull Springs, on the Paulina Ranger District in the Ochoco National Forest. About 25 OHA volunteers participated in the weekend project.

Quaking aspens have been declining in Oregon and throughout the West for a variety of reasons. One of the primary causes is wildfire prevention, which suppresses the growth of new trees and allows conifers to encroach into established aspen groves and eventually crowd them out.

Overgrazing by livestock and big game is another factor that prevents aspen shoots and young trees from growing to maturity and replacing older trees. To protect new aspen growth, members of OHA have been helping U.S. Forest Service biologists on the Ochoco National Forest fund and construct buck-and-pole fences around aspen groves to keep cattle, deer and elk away until the trees grow tall enough to withstand browsing by the animals.

According to Ochoco National Forest wildlife technician Paul Smith, who coordinated the project, buck-and-pole fences are perfect for protecting aspen groves from overgrazing, because, after they deteriorate and collapse in 10 to 20 years, they can be left on the landscape to eventually decay rather than having to be cleaned up. "And it's about the right timeframe for the aspens to reach six or seven feet above browse height," he said.

A number of OHA members who helped with the aspen fencing had just finished working on a similar project on the Prairie City Ranger District of the Malheur National Forest, where they fenced off several small aspen groves.



An OHA volunteer cuts a pine in a southern Oregon meadow that is shrinking due to encroaching conifers.

OHA erects fence to protect meadow on national forest

Two dozen members of the Rogue Valley Chapter of the Oregon Hunters Association spent June 27 erecting one mile of wire fence that the U.S. Forest Service uses to manage cattle grazing in the area around Crawford Meadow, near Prospect in the Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest.

Historically, the meadow was 220 acres in size, with approximately 25-30 acres along Crawford Creek dominated by riparian vegetation. The meadow provides high-quality summer forage for both elk and black-tailed deer. Currently, there are approximately 100 acres of open habitat in Crawford Meadow.

The fence is used to keep livestock out of the meadow during the summer months when cattle are brought onto the forest to graze. When the cattle are removed for the winter, the fence is lowered to allow deer, elk and other wildlife to access the meadow to feed. Open meadows provide important wildlife forage habitat on the Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest.

Encroaching conifers will eventually convert a meadow into forest, so regular tree culling is a way to maintain meadow habitat for wildlife. The goal is to restore all 220 acres to meadow habitat.

OHA volunteers repair two miles of fence at White River

About 65 volunteers from the Hoodview, Columbia County and Portland chapters of the Oregon Hunters Association spent June 13 repairing nearly two miles of big game



OHA members work to repair the fence at White River Wildlife Area.

fence on the White River Wildlife Area. For the past 11 years, OHA members have devoted a day each June to helping wildlife area staff repair the fences that are used to control and manage the movements of deer and elk.

The 40,877-acre White River Wildlife Area is located on the east slope of the Cascade Mountains near Wamic. It was purchased by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife in the 1950s and provides habitat for a variety of wildlife, including deer, elk and wild turkey.

The 50-mile-long, 10-foot-high drift fence was constructed after the property was acquired by the state to keep wintering deer and elk away from agricultural lands in the lowlands. Because of its age, the fence requires regular maintenance and repair. On their most recent visit, OHA volunteers replaced posts, rock cribs, gates and other structures.

OHA volunteers remove 65 yards of garbage from woods

Volunteers from the OHA Klamath Chapter spent June 27 cleaning up garbage illegally dumped on timberlands owned by Jeld-Wen near Keno. The cleanup was conducted along forest roads near Round Lake, Clover Creek and off Highway 66 near Keno.

Volunteers, who traveled a total of 855 miles patrolling for illegal dump sites, removed an estimated 65 cubic yards of garbage from the three areas, including appliances, computers, mattresses, and household garbage. In addition, they picked up 152 tires and 30 cubic yards of metal.

Volunteers included 16 members of the OHA Klamath Chapter and nine members of the Klamath Four Runners. Klamath Waste Management donated the use of dumpsters, and Klamath County Solid Waste provided a driver to transport the garbage to the landfill.

OHA grants fund projects in Oregon

Grants approved by the Oregon Hunters Association's State Board of Directors this spring are funding important habitat, access and youth projects in Oregon. The state-level funds are a combination of member dues and a portion of chapter banquet proceeds sent to state OHA.

OHA contributes \$5,500 grant to build hunting and wildlife viewing blind at Ladd Marsh Wildlife Area

Thanks in part to a \$5,500 grant from the Oregon Hunters Association, Ladd Marsh Wildlife Area will soon offer the public a new disabled-accessible waterfowl hunting and wildlife viewing blind, located on the east end of the wildlife area off Peach Road.

"The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife has been working to increase hunting, fishing and wildlife viewing opportunities for people with disabilities," said Dave Larson, wildlife area manager. "This blind will do double duty for both hunting waterfowl and viewing wildlife."

Groundwork on the blind was to begin by mid-July, with the project to be completed by mid-August.

In addition to the OHA grant, ODFW and the Oregon Duck Hunters Association are also contributing funding to the project.

Located five miles south of La Grande, the Ladd Marsh Wildlife Area is managed by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. It encompasses 3,208 acres of farmland, grassland and wetland that offer habitat to a variety of wildlife, including waterfowl, upland game birds, deer, pronghorn and numerous non-game species.

OHA awards \$15,000 grant for road management project

The Coquille Indian Tribe has been awarded a \$15,000 grant from the Oregon Hunters Association for a road and motor vehicle management project on its forest lands on the south coast intended to protect wildlife from harassment, prevent habitat damage and provide for a better quality hunt-



Ladd Marsh Wildlife Area will offer the public a new disabled-accessible waterfowl hunting and wildlife viewing blind located in this spot on the area's east side.

ing experience.

The project is located on the Coquille Forest, a 5,400-acre block of timberlands southeast of Myrtle Point, which is owned by the Coquille Indian Tribe and is also open to public access, including hunting. During the fall, excessive motor vehicle traffic on forest roads causes serious wildlife disturbance, and off-road vehicle use damages habitat and contributes to increased vandalism and garbage dumping.

The grant is being used to install gates to keep about 2,500 acres of forest off-limits to motor vehicles, except for forest and wildlife management purposes. Horseback, bicycle and walk-in public access will still be allowed.

"There is beautiful timber and lots of wildlife on the forest," said Darren Cagley, natural resources technician for the tribe, who is managing the gate installation project. "But from September to December we have a constant parade of vehicles out here." That has resulted in increased poaching activity on the forest along with other problems.

"We don't want to reduce hunting opportunities," said Cagley. "It's all open access, and limiting motor vehicle access will increase the quality of the hunting experience."

OHA provides \$3,800 in grants for Youth Outdoor Day at E.E. Wilson area

The Oregon Hunters Association provided a total of \$3,800 in grants to help fund the Youth Outdoor Day, held on May 30 at the E.E. Wilson Wildlife Area located north of Corvallis. The OHA State Board approved \$3,300 in grant funding, and several local chapters contributed \$500.

The annual event is intended to teach youth about hunting, fishing and conservation, and offers nearly three dozen outdoor related activities, such as sporting clays, a fishing derby, hunter education and decoy painting. Volunteers from the Capitol Chapter of OHA offered laser shoots and predator calling lessons at the event, which attracted nearly 750 kids and about 200 adult volunteers from various outdoor organizations. Participant ages ranged from four years to 16, and about half were girls.

"We also give prizes away for the purpose of providing the kids with some gear to motivate them to get back out into the outdoors after the event is over," said Sam Dufner, Youth Outdoor Day chairman and member of the OHA Capitol Chapter.