

RECREATION
REPORT

FIVE DEER HUNTS
CANCELED DUE TO
DISEASE IN WHITE-
TAILED DEER LAST
YEAR

SALEM — The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife is canceling five 600 Series deer hunts, meaning hunters will not be able to apply or draw the tag for them for the upcoming fall 2020 season. The cancellations are in an area of the Blue Mountains from Milton-Free-water to Pilot Rock where an outbreak of Epizootic hemorrhagic disease (EHD) is estimated to have killed 2,000 white-tailed deer late last year. The hunt cancellations for these 227 tags are needed to protect does and allow the white-tailed deer population to rebound. The hunts cancelled are on private land, where antlerless deer hunting addresses damage to agriculture. The hunt numbers are 649A (N Ukiah), 654A (Rawhide), 655A (Orchards), 655B1 and 655B2 (Walla Walla Valley No. 1 and No. 2). While some of the bag limits for these hunts allow an antlerless mule deer or white-tail to be harvested, most of the harvest is white-tailed deer in these hunts. These hunts will no longer be available for application through ODFW’s licensing system. ODFW License Sales Service staff will be contacting hunters who have already applied for these hunts and asking them to adjust their application through their online account (applications can be edited online under Recreational Portfolio/Controlled Hunts; see how-to online). While EHD typically does not have long-term impacts on white-tailed deer populations, cancellation of these hunts should help the population rebound faster.

MARINE BOARD
PROPOSES RULE
CHANGE FOR OUT-
FITTERS

The Oregon State Marine Board is soliciting written public comment on amending notification requirements for outfitters and guides. Current rules require outfitters and guides to notify the Marine Board whenever an employee’s CPR/First Aid Certification expires or is renewed. The proposed rule change removes this requirement and instead requires outfitters and guides to maintain those records for periodic review. Written comment will be accepted until 4:30 p.m. on April 1. Comments can be submitted by email to osmb.rulemaking@oregon.gov. The Board will meet April 15, 2020, and may make a motion to adopt the rule change.

Five deer hunts canceled due to disease in white-tailed deer last year.

State aims to curb poaching

By Jayson Jacoby
Baker City Herald

Poachers don’t just steal from hunters, Yvonne Shaw emphasizes — they steal from every Oregonian. Oregon’s wildlife belongs to every resident, and someone who illegally kills, say, a fine mule deer buck not only deprives hunters of the chance to put meat on the table, but also affects people who like to watch animals through binoculars or a spotting scope.

“When people poach animals they’re stealing from all Oregonians,” said Shaw, the newly hired coordinator of the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife’s (ODFW) Anti-Poaching Campaign.

“Poaching is a problem, a blatant disregard by some people for our laws,” Shaw said.

OSP recorded 7,644 poaching cases in 2018 — “and we think many cases go unreported,” Shaw said.

This new ODFW campaign is backed by more than words. The Oregon Legislature allocated \$4.4 million to help ODFW and two other state agencies target poachers across the state — Oregon State Police, which enforces hunting and fishing laws; and the Oregon Department of Justice, which prosecutes poachers.

“This legislation creates new opportunities for us to combine efforts with our law enforcement and judicial partners to reduce fish and wildlife crimes,” ODFW Director Curt Melcher said in a press release. “And most importantly, it will translate to improved fish and wildlife populations for the enjoyment of all Oregonians and our visitors.”

The campaign includes \$2.2 million to hire four State Police fish and wildlife troopers, as well as a sergeant, Shaw said.

OSP will also buy additional trail cameras, which can capture images of poachers in remote areas or places where poaching has been a problem or is suspected to be rampant.

Numbers help explain the monumental task that OSP faces in confronting poachers, Shaw said.

Even with the additional OSP troopers on duty, the odds of an officer catching a poacher in the act in Oregon, the 10th-largest state, covering 96,000 square miles, are low.

“It’s a challenge to patrol that amount of territory,” Shaw said, “and the Legislature recognizes that.”

The campaign also allows the Department of Justice to hire a prosecutor who can travel across the state to help counties prosecute poaching cases if their schedules make that difficult.

Mark Schoenborn, an OSP trooper who works in Multnomah and Clackamas counties, said the new roving prosecutor will be a beneficial addition to the state’s anti-poaching efforts.

“Having a dedicated fish and wildlife (prosecutor) is beneficial because of the nature of wildlife crimes,” Schoenborn said in a press release.

The third prong of the anti-poaching campaign is the education and awareness campaign that Shaw



An archery hunter shot this pronghorn antelope with a rifle in the Maury Unit of Central Oregon and then shot it with three arrows.



This Rocky Mountain elk bull was illegally killed near La Grande.

“We need to stop the poaching to save our precious wildlife resources, but also because it is unfair to true sportsmen, honest hunters and anglers who obey laws and bag limits.”

--State Rep. Bill Witt

was hired to direct.

Although she’s new to ODFW, having a background in campaign management and community education, Shaw said she “came from a hunting and fishing family, and I’ve lived in Oregon most of my life.”

Shaw said one of her goals is to encourage all Oregonians, both hunters and non-hunters, to both recognize potential poaching and, equally important, empower them to report incidents.

“Now with our populations changing and more people than ever recreating across the state, it’s important that we educate all Oregonians on how to recognize poaching when they see it,” Shaw said. “And to empower them to report the crime.”

Steve Hagan, northwest director for the Oregon Hunters Association,

which supported the legislation that created the anti-poaching campaign, said public awareness should help reduce poaching.

“We never had the opportunity to broadly influence education in every county,” Hagan said. “We never have had, in the past, a program or the staff to do that.”

OSP has operated the TIP — Turn In Poachers — phone line for many years. It allows anyone to dial a number — *OSP or 1-800-452-7888 — any time of day and alert OSP officers to potential poaching.

The TIP program offers people cash rewards for providing information that leads to a poaching citation, Shaw said.

Rewards range from \$100 to \$1,000 depending on species, with the \$1,000 for cases involving bighorn sheep or mountain goats, both

of which are once-in-a-lifetime hunting opportunities, or moose, for which there is no legal hunting in Oregon.

But a few years ago the state also offered, in lieu of cash rewards, preference points which give hunters a better chance to draw a hunting tag.

During an informal survey at a sports show in Redmond recently, almost all the people surveyed knew about the TIP program, Shaw said, but fewer than half knew that tipsters could choose between cash and preference points.

“We’re really going to push that,” with the new campaign, Shaw said.

State Rep. Bill Witt, a Salem Democrat who chairs the House Committee on Natural Resources and is an avid hunter, sponsored the legislation creating the anti-poaching campaign.

“We need to stop the poaching to save our precious wildlife resources, but also because it is unfair to true sportsmen, honest hunters and anglers who obey laws and bag limits and just want to enjoy a day in the field,” Witt said in the press release.

FISHING FORECAST

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife reports

WALLOWA LAKE

Recent reports suggest good size kokanee are available to the determined angler. Fishing for holdover trout can be good during late winter and early spring. Expect natural baits to be successful as stocked trout have been in the lake long enough to key in on food items in the lake.

WALLOWA RIVER

Steelhead fishing on the Wallowa River has been good with respectable catch rates. Flows are forecasted to remain good for fishing over the next week.

Steelhead season is open with a reduced daily

bag limit of one hatchery steelhead through April 30, 2020. Poor returns of steelhead are forecasted for the Snake River Basin prompting managers to reduce bag limits to ensure hatchery production can be met.

Managers will continue to evaluate the run and adjust bag limits as necessary. Expect steelhead fishing to improve as winter progresses and fish continue to move from the Grande Ronde River into the Wallowa River.

UMATILLA RIVER

Steelhead return numbers are still low but increased substantially during February. Since the first of February, 347

steelhead have returned to Three Mile Dam, putting the total return to date at 977 steelhead.

Umatilla River flows and river conditions are perfect, post flood boaters should be cautious of new boating hazards, as the flood moved lots of trees into the river channel. Fish should now be spreading throughout the system. Anglers are reminded of the reduced steelhead bag limit of one hatchery steelhead.

PEACH (LADD) POND:

The pond is ice free and will receive the first stocking of rainbow trout mid-April. Until then, fishing will be slow.

IMNAHA RIVER

Late winter and early spring is the best time of year to fish the Imnaha. Steelhead are moving into the Imnaha River from the Snake River on their final push toward the hatchery facility on Little Sheep Creek.

Anglers are reporting fair fishing and flows are forecasted to be good over the next week. Look for steelhead fishing to improve through April as long as flows cooperate.

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THIEF VALLEY RESERVOIR

The reservoir is at 100 percent of capacity and free of ice. While the dock is not in place, boat launching is possible at the boat launch.

Bank fishing for holdover rainbow trout 12-18 inches has been good. A few brave boaters have been out and have done well.

HIGHWAY 203 POND

The pond is free of ice. The pond will be stocked with rainbow trout for the first time this year in mid-April.