

Outdoor Rec / Local

Winter is coming ... with poachers



THE OUTDOOR COLUMN
By Todd Arriola

November brings with it clear signs of the upcoming winter season; plummeting temperatures, piercing wind, driven snow, and the appearance of what hunters and non-hunters alike consider a most despicable creature: the poacher.

Poaching is, of course, the unlawful taking or killing of wildlife, and, it's an illegal act that's treated with the utmost seriousness, no matter the side of the political aisle where one chooses to reside.

The penalties for poaching alone should be a deterrent, but, as is almost always the case with violations of the law, that's hardly a roadblock for

determined individuals. In Oregon, for example, according to Oregon Revised Statutes (ORS) 496.705, a deer taken illegally, with at least four points on one antler, could cost a poacher \$7,500; an elk, with at least six points on

one antler, \$15,000; an antelope, with at least one horn equal to or greater than 14 inches, \$7,500; a mountain sheep, with at least one horn equal to or greater than one half curl, or a mountain goat, with at least one horn equal to or greater than 6 inches, \$25,000. The list includes birds and fish, and a wide range of penalties.

The point is, poaching can cost one thousands. Not only that, but, "Our heritage is at risk every time an animal is poached, and it is time to get serious about this on-going problem," said Bruce Pettet, President and CEO of American sporting optics

maker, Leopold & Stevens.

Leopold & Stevens is partnering with the Boone and Crockett Club (B&C) to conduct a research program, dubbed "Poach and Pay," in order to determine whether higher fines will be a deterrent to poaching. "...in an effort to curb wildlife crime and more severely punish those who steal valuable conservation resources," according to B&C. The Poach and Pay program is led by B&C Official Measurer and former Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks biologist Vickie Edwards.

Interviews will be conducted with state agencies, according to B&C, and data will be gathered, the result of which may be a more appropriate scale for restitution, to aid in the deterrence of poaching, and to compensate for the rising costs of law enforcement and conservation efforts. The report is expected by summer of 2017.

Oregon, it appears, already employs elements of the B&C's big game scoring system in its poaching penalties. The scoring system is the recognized standard for the evaluation of big-game trophies

in North America, which makes it a valuable law enforcement tool, regarding more applicable penalties, according to B&C.

So, what do hunters think of this program? A recent survey of hunters conducted by the researchers found that 92.6% of respondents supported higher fines for poaching big game, and 88% supported even higher fines for poaching trophy big game, said B&C.

B&C President Morrie Stevens said, "Hunters and poachers are not brothers. Hunters support conservation and work to protect wildlife. Poaching is a crime and was established as such at the earliest stages of the conservation movement. For far too long, being convicted of poaching a deer or another big game animal has been akin to getting a speeding ticket in terms of the severity of punishment. Hunters tell us they want to see punishments equal to the crimes."

What the report will ultimately show remains to be seen, but, the issue of poaching isn't going away any time soon, and, neither are the penalties for committing it...

Deer Creek project complete



Submitted Photo.

Deer Creek juniper shown after the project.

The Baker Valley Soil and Water Conservation District partnered with a local landowner to stabilize the banks of Deer Creek in Baker Valley. Before the landowner approached the SWCD for assistance, there was very little vegetation on the immediate banks, and elk herds in the area were browsing what vegetation was present. Without a healthy riparian area, the banks began to cut and started sloughing into Deer Creek, causing sedimentation to enter the creek and move downstream.

To help mitigate the eroding banks, Juniper skeletons were placed along the worst sections of the creek during low

flows. Log jams and root wads were also placed in the cut banks in an effort to decrease some of the energy of the stream, as well as to prevent further erosion and cutting. These woody structures will catch sediment that was being washed downstream, and will help protect the young vegetation from browsing.

These project activities will continue to improve water quality over time, and will benefit the landowner by conserving pasture ground that was being lost every year to erosion. Those who could benefit from a conservation project on their land can contact the SWCD office at 541-523-7121.

Group will push for Oregon trapping ban in 2016

BY TODD ARRIOLA
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The organization TrapFree Oregon has been attempting to accomplish what it failed to do in time for the General Election in 2014—place a trapping ban measure on the state-wide ballot for 2016.

The Bend-based Trap-Free Oregon (TFO), whose mission, stated on social media, is to "Ban fur trapping in Oregon!" and to "Ban M44 (sodium cyanide)," made a similar attempt to get the initiative on the ballot for the 2014 voting season, however, according to its own information, there were several reasons cited why that goal was thwarted, and TFO refocused its efforts:

"1) Our recent polling indicates that very few Oregonians even know that trapping is legal and practiced all over the state. Education is going to take longer than the time we have before the 2014 ballot.

"2) Because of the low level of understanding about trapping, our polling numbers in favor of significant trapping restrictions were NOT high enough at this point to proceed.

"3) Our 2014 ballot initiative wording restricted the types of traps that could be used on private land. It was primarily the body-gripping traps that cause the most pain and suffering in the trapped animal, but our polling shows that any measure

that tries to restrict the rights of private property owners in OR faces significant opposition and is unlikely to pass.

"4) Failure is NOT an option on this one. The TFO feels that the extra two years will allow us to do what needs to be done to succeed. Rushing this process is not a good idea."

The failed attempt for the 2014 election was made by chief petitioners Mary Launer and Christopher Baker, of Bend, Oregon, and Miles Hutchins, of Redmond, Oregon. The petition, which was a statutory amendment proposal, had, as the certified ballot title, the following: "Bans commercial, recreational trapping; trading in resultant fur/body parts;

poisoning mammals; body-gripping traps."

Comments on the petition were received by the Secretary of State from Ross Day, on behalf of the Oregon Outdoor Council Association (OOCA), stating that the true subject matter of the petition was "the complete and total ban of the trapping of predatory animals by private individuals, yet creating an exception for the government," and that the draft caption "focuses on a politically charged term--'poisoning'--that is designed to influence the voter into supporting" the measure.

Further comments indicating issues with the petition were received by John Fine, on behalf of the Oregon Sheep Growers Association. Baker also submitted comments, with proposed ballot title changes, though the State found issues with the interpretations and proposed changes. The original caption read "Bans trapping, poisoning animals; trading in fur/body parts of trapped animal; body-gripping traps," and was ultimately amended by the State, as the aforementioned certified title.

Jim Soares, Advi-

sory Board member of the OOCA, said, of the potential 2016 measure, "Some sportsmen may think that they will not be affected, but they need to think again. Anti-trapping and anti-hunting groups try to pick off the smaller groups that they think are most vulnerable, but we have learned that ultimately their goal is to end all human use of wildlife. Sportsmen need to pay attention to this as loss for one of us is a loss for all of us."

"If you hunt ungulates you could be impacted by a trapping ban...If each coyote and bobcat takes just one elk calf, deer, or antelope fawn, there are that many less potentially available to hunters. If each coyote and bobcat takes multiple fawns, you can readily see the impact on your hunting opportunities especially in areas where some of these ungulate populations may be decreasing. If you add in predation by cougars, bears and now wolves, you can only imagine the loss in hunting opportunities. Trapping is the most effective way to keep coyotes and other predator numbers in check, and without that tool very high

populations of coyotes and other predators could have disastrous results for hunters, ranchers, and other groups," Soares said.

"This work (trapping) is done at no cost to the tax payers and is a great advantage to the refuge systems. Anti-trappers try to portray trappers as bloodthirsty individuals who only want to kill as many furbearers as possible. Nothing could be further from the truth," Soares said, explaining the knowledge and adherence to a code of ethics required to be a trapper, along with the regulations and monitoring regularly enforced by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW). Elements of the ODFW trapping regulations were developed with assistance from the OOCA.

Soares said, "The disastrous bear-cougar initiative that passed in 1994 should have opened everyone's eyes to the results of allowing the anti crowd to influence wildlife management. That ballot initiative was not part of any management strategy by the ODFW, or any pro-trapping or pro-hunting group, but rather the efforts of those opposed to our way of life."

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SWCD: Powder River enhancements made

The Powder River is listed by the state of Oregon for not meeting water quality standards for temperature, bacteria, and dissolved oxygen, so any project that works to improve water quality is very important to the Powder River Watershed.

On one landowner's property, the banks of the Powder River were being degraded and trampled due to livestock congregating and feeding near the river in the winter months.

Sediment and nutrients would enter the Powder River, and travel downstream.

The Baker Valley SWCD partnered with landowners to install 385 feet of riparian fencing along the Powder River.

This will allow for the exclusion of livestock along this stretch of the stream, thus decreasing trampling and sedimentation.

The landowners installed 50 willow plantings along

the river to help jump-start woody vegetation in the riparian area.

Three off-stream watering troughs were also installed on the property, and flow from an existing well.

Off stream water will keep livestock off the banks of the Powder River, and will allow the landowners to better manage grazing rotations on their property.