

SHOOTING THE BREEZE

Queasy rider

Hunting season this year, like so many other things about 2020, was somewhat underwhelming if not altogether lackluster. Still, whenever I get to feeling like I should sell all my guns and buy a treadmill on the premise that I would get just as much exercise and kill just as many elk, I think back to a day many moons ago for solace. It was a cold, rainy day on the Oregon Coast.

My one and only deep sea fishing trip was about to commence, and the excitement already had my stomach in knots. My party all decided to go get a huge breakfast in anticipation for the day's events. A friend who had "been there and done that" told me to buy some Dramamine and take it the night before and before getting on the boat so it would be in my system. That may have been the best decision I had made all weekend.

On the Oregon Coast there is a system which the Coast Guard and local fishermen adhere to as a safety guide. If there are three red flags flying, the ships don't launch at all. On this fateful day there were two red flags. We were escorted out, supervised from a distance and escorted back to port by the Coast Guard. The waves were huge. One younger passenger on our boat may have been brought to tears as the roller coaster ride out of the harbor was eerily similar to the climactic scene in *The Perfect Storm*, a fact he may have exclaimed out loud between whimpers.

Once we were allowed to come out on the deck and drop our lines into the water, the fishing was immediately magnificent. Rock bass and ling cod were biting faster than one could reel them in and cast back into the water. The waves were 25 to 30 feet, and our boat was constantly moving. There was a cute girl to my right whom I thought about giving my phone number to for a brief time, and then just like that, the barf-arama began.

I looked around the boat, and instead of seeing gleeful faces enjoying a day on the ocean, it looked more like a scene from *Stand by Me*. Oh the chum made the fishing even better, but the rest of it wasn't so good. That cute girl I thought about asking out managed to vomit on me. It's bad enough if you get your own on yourself, but it's even worse when it's a stranger's. One passenger had it stuck in his beard. Another exclaimed that she would prefer to fall overboard and be eaten by a shark than to further endure this fiasco. The captain carefully counted the catch and realized that we had all caught our limit of fish. Wiping breakfast from his chin, he staggered to the wheel and turned us to port. Of the entire compliment, 18 of the 22 of us got violently sea sick that day. Myself and three others were spared participation but were still spectators in a literal front row splash zone. But the fishing was good.

No matter how bad of a time or year you may be having, it could always be worse. Keep your chin up and don't let breakfast come back to haunt you or any innocent bystanders.

Have you ever been deep sea fishing? Write to us at shootingthebreeze@me.com!

Dale Valade is a local country gent with a love for the outdoors, handloading hunting and shooting.



Dale Valade

Grazing permit restored to Hammond family

By Mateusz Perkowski
EO Media Group

The federal government has authorized livestock grazing on 26,400 acres of public allotments in Oregon to the Hammond family, which most recently lost its permit in 2019.

Controversies over the family's use of the grazing allotments stem from the arson convictions of Dwight and Steven Hammond, a father and son who were later pardoned by President Donald Trump for setting fire to rangelands.

"It's great news they've issued the final decision and issued the grazing permit to the Hammond family," said Alan Schroeder, the family's attorney. "The fact it's been restored will certainly stabilize this livestock operation that's been around for 50 years."

Not being allowed to graze livestock on public lands in previous years had a "material" impact on the Hammond family, which owns a ranch amid the allotments in Diamond, he said.

"They were forced to go other places to put their livestock," which involved significant expenses for hay, leases and transportation, Schroeder said.

The Western Watersheds Project, an environmental group opposed to the grazing authorization, isn't surprised by the decision because the Trump administration has "bent over backwards" to accommodate

the Hammond family, said Erik Molvar, its executive director.

"This is a totally political decision," Molvar said.

The ranchers were originally indicted for setting fires to government property in 2010 and convicted in a federal jury trial two years later.

Dwight Hammond was originally sentenced to three months in prison for one count of arson and Steven Hammond sentenced to one year in prison for two counts of arson.

However, the father and son were ordered to return to prison in 2016 after the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled they were subject to mandatory five-year prison terms.

Protests against the decision culminated in an armed standoff at the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge that gained national attention.

Trump fully pardoned the Hammonds in 2018 before they were finished serving the entire mandatory minimum sentences.

While the criminal proceedings played out in federal court in 2014, the U.S. Bureau of Land Management also refused to renew the Hammonds' 10-year grazing permit for surrounding public lands.

The U.S. Interior Department, which oversees the BLM, ended up renewing the Hammonds' grazing permits in early 2019, citing the pardons as a new circumstance, but U.S. District Judge Michael Simon ruled that decision was unlaw-

ful and overturned it later that same year.

The BLM opened up the four allotments to competition last year, with the Hammonds vying against two other applicants for permits to graze the combined 26,400 acres.

The agency has now issued a new 10-year permit to the Hammonds after determining that five of the eight regulatory factors considered "generally weigh in favor" of the family, including its historic use and proximity to the allotments.

The Western Watersheds Project protested the BLM's proposal to issue the grazing permit and is now "looking at all the options," including a federal lawsuit against the decision, said Molvar.

When ranchers violate the terms of their grazing permits, those authorizations should be revoked, he said. "The BLM has no business issuing grazing permits to known offenders."

Schroeder, the attorney for the Hammond family, said he's still reviewing the specifics of the new permit but said the BLM based its legal decision on solid legal grounds.

The decision to issue a new permit in 2021 was based on different factors than the government's previous renewal in 2019, which was overturned in court, he said.

"The department went above and beyond what Judge Simon required of them," Schroeder said.

Report hunts online or at license sales agent by Jan. 31

Blue Mountain Eagle

Big game and turkey hunters should report their tags online or at a license sale agent to avoid long phone queues.

The deadline to report most tags and avoid any penalties is 11:59 p.m. on Sunday, Jan. 31, according to an Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife press release.

Hunters need to report on every deer, elk, bear, cougar, turkey and pronghorn tag purchased or issued as part of a Sports Pac license, even if they didn't harvest an animal or go hunting.

Go to <https://odfw.huntfishoregon.com/login> and use "Verify/Look Up" to find a hunter profile, which will include any tags to report. Enter ODFW ID number (printed on all licenses and tags) and follow the directions to set up an account. An email address is required. Click under "Mandatory Reporting" to complete reports.

Hunters can also visit any license sale agent (businesses that sell hunting and fishing licenses) to report.

License agents will not charge hunters a fee for this service. See a list of agents at <https://myodfw.com/arti->



Contributed photo

Richard McCurter from St. Helens with the Wenaha Unit bull elk he took in 2020 after winning the incentive tag for reporting hunts on time. The deadline to report hunts ending in 2020 is Jan. 30, 2021.

odfw.com/where-find-odfw-license-agents/vendors.

Hunters who fail to report a deer or elk tag by the deadline will be charged a \$25 penalty. They will have to pay this fine to purchase a 2022 or future hunting license. (The deadline to report is Jan. 31, 2021, for any hunt that ends by Dec. 31, 2020, and April 15, 2021 for 2020 hunts that extend into the new year.)

To learn more about mandatory reporting, visit myodfw.com or listen to the Beaver State Podcast.

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