



Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission Minutes

Meeting:
Thursday, September 11, 2025, 8:00
Holiday Inn Express
212 SE 10th St
Ontario, OR 97314

Meeting:
Friday, September 12, 2025– 8:00 AM
Four Rivers Cultural Center
6376 SW 5th Ave.
Ontario, OR 97314

Commission minutes are considered draft until approved by the Commission.

Notice of these meetings had been made by press release of statewide media circulation. Those attending part or all of the meeting included:

Mary Wahl, Chair	Debbie Colbert, Director
Becky Hatfield-Hyde, Vice Chair	Ken Loffink, Chief Operating Officer
Bob Spelbrink, Commissioner -virtual	Shaun Clements, Deputy Director of Fish & Wildlife Programs
Mark Labhart, Commissioner	Nick Myatt, East Region Manager
Leslie King, Commissioner	Mike Gauvin, Acting West Region Manager
Dallas Hall Defrees, Commissioner	Bernadette Graham Hudson, Wildlife Division Administrator
	Mike Harrington, Fish Division Administrator
	Sarah Reif, Habitat Division Administrator
	Michelle Tate, Executive Assistant
	Ryan Howell, Oregon State Police
	Anika Marriott, Assistant Attorney General
	Erin Donald, Assistant Attorney General

MEETING

On Friday, **September 12, 2025 at 8:00 AM**, Chair Wahl called the **Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission** (the Commission) meeting to order.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Field Reports – in written form only; *this report is available in the meeting materials and at <https://myodfw.com/sites/default/files/2025-09/September%202025%20Field%20Report.pdf>*

Financial Report
Ken Loffink, Chief Operating Officer

Ken reported that while the budget will remain open through December 2025 for final adjustments, this is the final financial report for the period as the agency transitions to the new biennium. As of July 30, 2025, the department held a total of \$169.0 million in the State Treasury- \$79.7 million in unrestricted cash (including over \$20 million in insurance funding for wildfire damage) and \$89.3 million in restricted cash, with the unrestricted balance increasing by \$6 million due to strong license sales and federal reimbursements; it also includes \$20 million in wildfire insurance funds. Expenditures are tracking as expected at 73.25% of the approved budget and will

increase slightly as final adjustments occur. Revenues are also on track, with 2025 license sales 3% higher than 2024 and expected to remain strong through October. The 2025–2027 budget is finalized and in the execution phase, with auditing and program allocation work underway, and development for the 2027–2029 budget will begin this winter.

This report is available in the meeting materials and at
<https://myodfw.com/sites/default/files/2025-09/Commission%20Financial%20Report%20September%202025.pdf>

CLIMATE & OCEAN CHANGE POLICY REPORT

Fire/Invasive Annual Grasses

Lindsey Somers, Natural Resources Specialist 2

Dan Somers, Wildlife Manager

Ryan Torland, Wildlife District Biologist

This report is available in the meeting materials and at
<https://myodfw.com/sites/default/files/2025-09/Climate%20Report%20Annual%20Grass%20Presentation%200.pdf>

BEAVER ACTION PLAN UPDATE

Adrienne Averett, Implementation Coordinator

This report is available in the meeting materials and at
<https://myodfw.com/sites/default/files/2025-09/Beaver%20Action%20Plan%20Presentation.pdf>

ADOPT TEMPORARY RULES

Debbie Colbert, Director, requested the Commission ratify the following temporary rules. The eight (8) temporary rules were previously adopted by the director under her emergency action authority.

1.) 635-06-0510

Hatchery Chinook Bonus Bag Limit in the Coos River Basin

Adopted: 8/18/2025 Effective Dates: 8/19/2025 through 12/31/2025

This amended rule will add an additional salmon to the bag limit in the Coos Basin.

2.) 635-016-0050

Closure of Umpqua River Basin to Chinook Salmon Angling

Adopted: 8/18/2025 Effective Dates: 8/19/2025 through 11/30/2025

This amended rule closes angling for and retention of all Chinook.

3.) 635-016-0510

Hatchery Chinook Bonus Bag Limit in the Coos River Basin

Adopted: 8/20/2025 Effective Dates: 8/20/2025 through 12/31/2025

This amended rule will add an additional salmon to the bag limit in the Coos Basin.

4.) 635-042-0032

Set Columbia River Non-Treaty Late Fall Commercial Tangle Net Salmon Fishery

Adopted: 8/22/2025 Effective Dates: 9/16/2025 through 12/31/2025

This rule authorizes 34 late fall non-treaty commercial tangle net fishing periods in Zones 1-3 of the lower Columbia River.

5.) 635-016-0500

Closure of Umpqua River Basin to Chinook Salmon Angling and Retention

Adopted: 8/18/2025 Effective Dates: 8/19/2025 through 11/30/2025

This amended rule closes angling for and retention of all salmon species in the Mainstem Umpqua, Smith, and North Fork Smith rivers in all waters.

6.) 635-016-0500

(Corrected) Closure of Umpqua River Basin to Chinook Salmon Angling and Retention

Adopted: 8/18/2025 Effective Dates: 8/25/2025 through 11/30/2025

This amended rule closes angling for and retention of all salmon species in the Mainstem Umpqua, Smith, and North Fork Smith rivers in all waters.

7.) 635-041-0075

Authorize sales of fish caught in the Columbia River Zone 6 Treaty commercial gillnet fisheries to state-licensed buyers.

Adopted: M/D/2025 Effective Dates: 9/8/2025 through 12/31/2025

These amended rules authorize the sales of fish caught in Zone 6 treaty commercial gillnet fisheries. Open fishing periods are from September 8 through September 13, and September 15 through September 19.

8.) 635-042-0060

Set mainstem Columbia River late fall commercial gillnet fishery

Adopted: 9/5/2025 Effective Dates: 9/7/2025 through 12/31/2025

This rule authorizes one commercial non-treaty gillnet fishing period in the mainstem Columbia River commercial Zones 4-5 for September 7 through September 8.

Action:

Commissioner King moved to ratify the eight (8) temporary rules set forth in the September 12, 2025 agenda. Commissioner Labhart seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously, six (6) in favor. Wahl, Hatfield-Hyde; Labhart, Spelbrink, King, Hall Defees

COMMISSION UPDATES

No Commission Action

OTHER BUSINESS

EXHIBIT A: COMMISSION MINUTES

Commission Action: Approval

Commissioner Labhart moved to approve August 15, 2025, meeting minutes with continued authority to correct grammar and punctuation. Commissioner Hatfield-Hyde seconded the motion, and the motion was carried six (6) in favor. Wahl, Hatfield-Hyde; Labhart, Spelbrink, King, Hall Defees

EXHIBIT B: 2025 GREATER SAGE-GROUSE CONSERVATION ASSESSMENT AND STRATEGY FOR OREGON

The Commission approved updated to the “Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Assessment and Strategy for Oregon” and amend associated rules.

Commission Action: Rulemaking

Mikal Cline, Upland Game Bird Coordinator

Skyler Vold, Sage Grouse Conservation Coordinator

Presentation: Mikal and Skyler provided the Commission with a presentation outlining the major updates to the state's approach for conserving greater sage-grouse populations. Including a revised population model and updated habitat maps and emphasizes a tiered strategy aligned with the Oregon Sage-grouse Action Plan and federal BLM plans. Key updates include new definitions for leks (breeding sites), habitat objectives requiring at least 70% sagebrush coverage in priority areas, and a focus on threat-based conservation. The strategy promotes coordinated efforts across agencies and landowners, with goals to maintain or enhance sage-grouse populations around the 2003 baseline (~53,000 birds) and ensure stable or increasing trends at both state and local (PAC) levels. The plan also recommends regulatory amendments and outlines ODFW’s responsibilities in monitoring, mitigation, and collaborative management.

This presentation is located in the commission material and can be viewed at https://myodfw.com/sites/default/files/2025-09/Ex%20B_Presentation.pdf

Public Testimony

Andy Rieber Paramount Gold Nevada

Rachel Goldman Paramount Gold Nevada

Taylor Rembowski Malheur County Economic Development Director

Ron Jacobs Malheur County

Action:

Commissioner Hatfield-Hyde moved to amend OAR Chapter 635, Division 140 as proposed by staff and shown in Attachment 4, except that the adopted language in the second sentence of OAR 635-140-0000 reads: The “Oregon Sage-Grouse Core and Low-Density Habitat Map” (2023) is considered the best available science on Greater Sage-Grouse distribution, available habitat, and core area and low density areas.

Commissioner Spelbrink seconded the motion, and the motion was carried six (6) in favor. Wahl, Hatfield-Hyde; Labhart, Spelbrink, King, Hall Defees

EXHIBIT C: 2026-27 SPORT FISHING REGULATIONS, OCEAN ENDORSEMENT, AND COQUILLE RIVER HATCHERY FALL CHINOOK

The Commission adopted administrative rules to set the 2026-27 Recreational Sport Fishing Regulations, the Ocean Endorsement, and set a season for hatchery Chinook salmon in the Coquille River.

Commission Action: Rulemaking

Michele Weaver, Acting Recreational Fisheries Manager

Presentation: Michele provided the Commission with a presentation outlining the proposed administrative rule changes for the 2026–2027 recreational sport fishing regulations and Ocean Endorsement. The focus is on maintaining stable fisheries, simplifying regulations, addressing conservation needs, and improving public engagement. Key proposals include allowing spearfishing for bass and walleye in certain waters, increasing the kokanee bag limit statewide, and updating zone-specific rules such as closing parts of the John Day River to salmon and steelhead fishing and removing limits on lake trout in Wallowa Lake. The presentation also emphasizes climate change considerations, tribal coordination, and targeted outreach efforts to ensure inclusive public input.

This presentation is located in the commission material and can be viewed at https://myodfw.com/sites/default/files/2025-09/Ex%20C_Presentation.pdf

Public Testimony

James Fraser Trout Unlimited

Ethan Smith

Brian McLachlan

Mike Kennedy Notional Freshwater Spearfishing Association

Kenny Daiker

Action:

Issue 1:

Commissioner Labhart moved to amend the Sport Fishing Regulations as proposed by staff in attachment 3a, and in addition as proposed by staff in attachment 4 except that with respect to Proposal Number 59: Proposed Regulation Open for hatchery steelhead Aug 1 - Dec 31- that the date of August 1 is changed to November 1. I also authorize staff to update the necessary calendar dates and make formatting changes to correct spelling and grammar errors, and to address inadvertent inconsistencies to improve readability. Commissioner Hall Defrees seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously, six (6) in favor. Wahl, Hatfield-Hyde; Labhart, Spelbrink, King, Hall Defees

Issue 2:

Commissioner Hall Defrees moved to adopt the staff recommendations to allow for harvest opportunity for hatchery Chinook salmon in the Coquille River as proposed by staff in Attachment 3b. Commissioner Spelbrink seconded the motion, and the motion carried five (5) in favor. Hatfield-Hyde, Labhart, Spelbrink, King, Hall Defees. One (1) opposed Wahl

EXHIBIT D: 2026 BIG GAME SEASONS AND REGULATIONS

1 The Commission adopted administrative rules for 2026 big game and western gray squirrel season
2 dates, open areas, dates and locations of travel management areas, and 2026 Oregon big game
3 season-controlled hunt tag numbers.

4 *Commission Action: Rulemaking*

5 Dr. Don Whittaker, Ungulate Species Coordinator

6 Sam Fino, Carnivore-Furbearer Coordinator

7 Derek Broman, Game Program Manager

8
9 Presentation: Staff provided the Commission with a presentation outlining proposed updates to
10 hunting regulations based on biological data, population surveys, and public input. Key highlights
11 include maintaining sustainable harvest frameworks, managing wildlife populations through habitat
12 restoration and conflict mitigation, and adjusting hunting opportunities. Cougar and black bear
13 populations are stable or increasing, with proposals to maintain current season structures while
14 protecting young and females with offspring. For ungulates, bighorn sheep and mountain goat
15 populations are stable or growing, prompting minor tag adjustments. Elk proposals include
16 removing some western hunts and adding new eastern ones to align with management goals. The
17 presentation emphasizes data-driven decisions, public engagement, and adaptive strategies to
18 ensure long-term wildlife health and hunting opportunities.

19
20 *This presentation is located in the commission material and can be viewed at*
21 https://myodfw.com/sites/default/files/2025-09/Ex%20D_Presentation.pdf
22

23 *Public Testimony*

Dean Pollman High Izee Ranch LLC

Natasha Pollman

Tom Metcalf

24
25 *Action:*

26 Commissioner Labhart moved to adopt the staff proposals in Attachment 3 and amend OAR
27 Chapter 635, Divisions 045, 060, 065, 066, 067, 068, 069, 070, 071, 072, 073 and 075 as
28 proposed by staff. Commissioner Hall Defrees seconded the motion, and the motion was
29 carried six (6) in favor. Wahl, Hatfield-Hyde; Labhart, Spelbrink, King, Hall Defrees
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31 **EXHIBIT E: OREGON CONSERVATION & RECREATION FUND PROJECT FUNDING**

32 The Commission approved projects from Spring 2025 Grant solicitation.

33 *Commission Action: Approval*

34 Revia Gilman, Oregon Conservation & Recreation Fund Coordinator

35
36 *Presentation:* Reva provided the Commission with a presentation outlining the grant
37 recommendations for the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's (ODFW) 2025 review of the
38 Oregon Conservation & Recreation Fund (OCRF), recommending funding for 19 projects totaling
39 about \$1.04 million. The projects include 13 focused on drought resilience and six on non-drought
40 issues. Highlighted items include efforts such as "Trail Champions 2026," "Monitoring the Drought
41 Resilience of Wetlands and Amphibians," "Fishing and Shell fishing with Oregon's Physical Disability

Community,” and “From River to Action: Empowering Underserved Leaders to Implement Conservation Plans in Malheur County.” The staff recommendation seeks Commission approval for all 19 projects and the associated funding.

This presentation is located in the commission material and can be viewed at https://myodfw.com/sites/default/files/2025-09/Ex%20E_Presentation.pdf

No Public Testimony

Action:

Commissioner Hall Defrees moved to approve the 19 projects recommended for funding by the Oregon Conservation and Recreation Advisory Committee as described in Attachment 2. Commissioner Hatfield-Hyde seconded the motion, and the motion was carried four (4) in favor: Wahl, Hatfield-Hyde; Labhart, Spelbrink, Hall Defrees. One (1) abstained: King. One (1) unavailable Spelbrink.

EXHIBIT F: ACCESS & HABITAT – PROJECT FUNDING AND BOARD REPRESENTATIVE APPROVAL

The Commission will be asked to Review and approval of the Access & Habitat Board’s July 15, 2025, recommendations for project funding, Appointment of a Landowner Representative and a Hunter Representative to the A&H Board.

Commission Action: Approval & Appointment

Travis Schultz, Access and Habitat Board Coordinator

Presentation: Travis provided the Commission with a presentation outlining three major habitat and access renewal projects: installation of a gate on Giustina Resources land to better enforce road closures across 39,000 + acres of TMA access; improvement of nine acres of riparian woodland habitat at the Rogue River Preserve and enhancement of hunter access through the Hunt-by-Reservation system; and survey and treatment of approximately 3,928 acres in the Harney Basin to eradicate salt cedar. Additionally, two board appointments are recommended: re-appointment of Nic Callero as the Hunter Representative and appointment of John Dehler III as Landowner Representative on the Access & Habitat Board.

This presentation is located in the commission material and can be viewed at https://myodfw.com/sites/default/files/2025-09/Ex%20F_Presentation.pdf

No Public Testimony

Action:

Issue 1:

Commissioner Hall Defrees moved to approve the three projects, as described in Attachment 2, that were recommended for funding by the Access & Habitat Board. Commissioner Labhart seconded the motion, and the motion was carried six (6) in favor. Wahl, Hatfield-Hyde; Labhart, Spelbrink, King, Hall Defrees

Issue 2:

1 Commissioner Labhart moved to appoint Nic Callero to serve a four-year term as a Hunter
2 Representatives on the Access and Habitat Board. Commissioner King seconded the motion, and the
3 motion was carried six (6) in favor. Wahl, Hatfield-Hyde; Labhart, Spelbrink, King, Hall Defrees
4

5 Issue 3:

6 Commissioner Hatfield-Hyde moved to appoint John Dehler III to serve a four-year term as
7 Landowner Representative on the Access and Habitat Board. Commissioner Hall Defrees seconded
8 the motion, and the motion was carried six (6) in favor. Wahl, Hatfield-Hyde; Labhart, Spelbrink,
9 King, Hall Defrees
10

11
12 Chair Wahl adjourned the meeting at 3:20 p.m.