



## AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY

### BACKGROUND

The Ken Denman Wildlife Area (DWA) was created in 1954 when 1,760 acres of the former Camp White Military Reservation were transferred to the Oregon Game Commission by the United States General Service Administration. This land was deeded with the condition that it be used for wildlife conservation. Since then, additional land purchases have expanded the area to 1,858 acres.

DWA is managed to protect and enhance fish and wildlife habitats, providing the public with various recreational and educational opportunities focused on wildlife. The area includes diverse habitats such as vernal pools, grasslands, oak woodlands, riparian zones, and wetlands, supporting many plant and animal species. The DWA Management Plan aims to offer high-quality recreational activities like hunting, fishing, hiking, bird watching, dog training, kayaking, and other non-motorized activities compatible with wildlife conservation.

What makes DWA unique is its large habitat segment on the Rogue River valley floor, surrounded by commercial properties. As industrial development continues in the area, the open habitats provided by DWA will become even more valuable for public use. Ensuring and improving access for visitors is essential to achieve the management plan's goals. The proposed land acquisition, although similar to existing DWA property, has no agricultural or practical use due to its landscape constraints. However, acquiring it would enhance access and enforcement, preventing issues like illegal encampments, and benefit the community.

The Department must get approval from the Fish and Wildlife Commission for any land transactions valued over \$100,000. The primary funding for this acquisition will come from Pittman-Robertson (PR) funds, initially requested in the 2023-24 Denman Wildlife Area PR application.

### PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

In preparation for the Commission's consideration of the proposed action, the department has published a notice to allow the public to review this approval. Furthermore, the public is invited to provide comments either in writing before the hearing or orally during the Commission meeting.

## **ISSUE 1**

Acquire the 5.67 acres of railroad property to incorporate it into the Ken Denman Wildlife Area.

## **ANALYSIS**

The railroad right-of-way property is a 5.67-acre piece of privately owned land (see Attachment 1: Figure 1) that cuts through the eastern part of the 600-acre Hall Tract on the Denman Wildlife Area (DWA) (see Attachment 1: Figure 2). Although most of the land that makes up the DWA was once part of the Camp White Military Reservation, this particular property was owned by the railroad at the time of the 1954 donation and thus was not included.

Currently, this property divides the DWA and causes access problems for visitors who park at the Agate Road parking lot and walk to the neighboring ponds. Technically, people are trespassing on private property when they cross this section. While the current landowners have been accommodating to wildlife area visitors, this informal agreement could change if the property were ever sold. The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) now has the chance to buy this unique property and secure public access.

A Pittman-Robertson (PR) grant of \$100,000 was awarded during the 2023-24 fiscal year (F22AF03432-00) and has been carried over through several funding cycles since the initial award. The current appraisal value of the property is \$111,150.00. The difference between the grant and the appraisal value will be covered by additional PR funds.

If acquired, management of the railroad property will fall under the existing Denman Wildlife Area Program and will be primarily funded with Pittman-Robertson funds.

## **OPTIONS**

1. Approve acquisition of the railroad property.
2. Take no action.

## **STAFF RECOMMENDATION: ISSUE 1**

Approve the acquisition of the railroad property (5.67 acres in Jackson County) and direct staff to process to escrow closing upon completion of all processes required under Oregon law for land acquisition.

**DRAFT MOTION: I move to approve acquiring the 5.67-acre railroad property and incorporating it into the Denman Wildlife Area for public benefit.**

**Effective Date:** *Upon Approval*