



AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

Created in 1993 by the Oregon Legislative Assembly, the seven-member Access & Habitat (A&H) Board (Board) reviews project proposals that improve wildlife habitat and/or enhance public hunting access in Oregon. Project applications, submitted by landowners, corporations, organizations, and agencies, are initially reviewed by Board-appointed Regional Councils established in five geographic regions of the state. Regional Councils forward proposals to the Board with recommendations to approve or deny projects. The Board provides the next level of project review and then forwards proposals to the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission (Commission) for final consideration and approval to expend A&H Program funds.

Funding for the A&H Program, approximately \$3.4 million per biennium, is from three primary sources:

- \$4 from each hunting and combination license sold (approximately \$1.5 million per biennium)
- Proceeds from the annual Big Game Auction and Raffle tags (approximately \$1.9 million per biennium)
- Biennial allocation of approximately \$91,000 from the Green Forage and Deer Enhancement and Restoration programs

The A&H Program dedicated account balance was \$4,055,973 at the end of November 2025. A&H Program funds deposited in the dedicated account can only be expended for program activities. As of January 1, contracted A&H projects provide hunters with access to over 2.2 million acres of private land and have improved over 23,000 acres of habitat for wildlife during this biennium.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

A&H provides an opportunity for public involvement at Regional Council and Board meetings, which are advertised by Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (department) news releases and on the department webpage. Meeting materials are posted on the department website and members of the public may review documents and submit comments. Interested parties may attend in person or virtually to provide public comment during these meetings. The Board most recently met in Salem on January 12, 2026.

ISSUE 1

A&H PROJECT FUNDING RECOMMENDATIONS

ANALYSIS

A summary of the eight projects recommended for funding by the A&H Board is presented in the staff project summary (Attachment 2).

OPTIONS

Option 1. Approve A&H Board recommendations.

Option 2. Reject project proposals.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Option 1. Approve the projects recommended by the A&H Board.

DRAFT MOTION:

I move to approve the eight projects recommended for funding by the Access & Habitat Board.

Effective Date: March 20, 2026

ISSUE 2

INSURANCE REQUIREMENT PAYMENT

BACKGROUND

The Department of Administrative Services (DAS) mandated insurance for all grant programs, with specific insurance requirements depending on a project's proposed activities. The A&H program started requiring insurance on projects about eighteen months ago to ensure liability protection and compliance with state rules. This change imposes additional costs on landowners, which may discourage program participation or delay project implementation.

ANALYSIS

All A&H projects are required to maintain General Commercial Liability Insurance with minimum coverage of \$1 million per occurrence and \$2 million aggregate, listing the department as both an additional insured and certificate holder.

This requirement introduces a new cost for landowners and may discourage participation in A&H grants. Initially, landowners only needed to list the department as a certificate holder, which incurred no additional expense. However, recent updates from DAS now require the department to be included as an additional insured, which can result in added costs for landowners.

Experience from projects funded over the past 18 months has provided insight into how this requirement affects landowner engagement. While routine for landowners who regularly lease property for grazing, farming, or timber, the requirement poses challenges for smaller producers who farm or graze only their own land. Many are reluctant to contact their insurance agent due to concerns about potential rate increases, creating stress that could reduce program participation.

Proposed Support Measures

- **\$100 Incentive:** Offered to landowners during the first year to compensate for time spent consulting with their insurance agent and to acknowledge the burden.
- **Coverage of Additional Insured Costs:** The proposal will cover the cost of adding the department as an additional insured for the duration of the agreement. Reported costs range from \$0–\$40 annually.
- **Limited Coverage for Liability Insurance:** In rare cases where a small landowner lacks sufficient coverage, funds may be used to meet the minimum insurance requirement.

Eligibility for these funds is limited to landowners receiving access payments of less than \$35,000. These funds are intended as a short-term solution for initial compliance. Future renewals will incorporate insurance costs into project applications.

Lastly, these funds will not cover other categories of required insurance, which are typically more expensive and should be included in the project's budget sheet. The intent is to assist smaller landowners with commercial liability and additional insured costs only.

OPTIONS

- Option 1. Approve the project as proposed.
- Option 2. Approve the project as modified.
- Option 3. Deny the project as proposed.
- Option 4: Deny, Withdraw, & Resubmit to Council

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

- Option 1. Approve the budget recommended by the A&H Board.

DRAFT MOTION:

I move to approve the Insurance Requirement Payment Administrative Budget as proposed.