



ODFW Field Reports

Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission
April 24, 2026

East Region

Nick Myatt, Region Manager

Wenaha and Mountain View bighorn sheep disease monitoring

As part of ongoing disease monitoring efforts in northeast Oregon, staff from Wallowa District and Headquarters worked with partners in the Hells Canyon Bighorn Sheep Recovery Initiative to capture and GPS collar 59 Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep on February 25 and 26. Thirty animals were captured from the Mountain View herd, located downstream of Troy, Oregon, and an additional 29 were captured in the Wenaha Wildlife Area.



Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep ram at Wenaha Wildlife Area, Feb. 2026. ODFW photo.

While pneumonia outbreaks in the Hells Canyon metapopulation of bighorn sheep have occurred intermittently throughout the past century, the most recent cases were documented in 2024. *Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae* or “Movi,” caused the recent pneumonia outbreaks which led to several bighorn sheep die-offs in some northern Hells Canyon herds. Since then, the spread of Movi in the tri-state area has impacted herds in the Snake River and Grande Ronde basins.

This year’s Mountain View capture near the Washington and Oregon border marked the first time in the 30-year history of the Hells Canyon initiative that all partners were present for the capture on the same day. This included Idaho

Fish and Game, Wash., Dept. of Fish and Wildlife, the Nez Perce Tribe, the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, national Wild Sheep Foundation staff and Wild Sheep Foundation Oregon chapter volunteers.

In addition to the biologists working on the ground, the editor from the *Confederated Umatilla Journal* also joined the team during the capture effort. He documented the experience firsthand, and his full article can be found at the following link:

https://issuu.com/confederatedumatillajournal/docs/cuj_march_2026



ODFW, IDFG and WDFW staff collaborate on bighorn disease testing at a site along the Grande Ronde River near Troy, Ore., Feb. 2026. ODFW photo.

A short video about the Wenaha-area bighorn capture featuring recently retired ungulate coordinator, Don Whittaker, can be found here: <https://youtu.be/NqMovtxXFEY>

Steelhead Comeback at Ochoco Preserve

On March 6, 2026, ODFW and the Deschutes Land Trust (DLT) confirmed a milestone decades in the making: the first documented summer steelhead spawning in McKay Creek at Ochoco Preserve since the 1950s. Since that initial discovery, biologists have identified at least ten redds, all with active spawners. Located at the confluence of McKay and Ochoco creeks and the Crooked River, the 185-acre Ochoco Preserve provides critical habitat for

resident and anadromous fish, as well as mammals, amphibians, and birds. DLT acquired the property near Prineville in 2017..



Summer steelhead redd in McKay Creek March 27, 2026.

For more than a century, the area experienced extensive agricultural alterations—stream straightening and relocation, diking, armoring, and wetland loss—that degraded ecological function. From 2022–2024, ODFW, DLT, engineers, and contractors undertook an ambitious large-scale restoration effort. ODFW led fish and mussel salvage operations while the broader project reconnected streams to their historic channels, expanded wetlands, reshaped floodplains and uplands, created beaver ponds for juvenile fish, and installed 141 wood structures to enhance habitat.

Funding for the project came from Portland General Electric, the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, ODFW, OWEB, and additional partners. Two newly constructed beaver-style ponds were also built specifically to support ODFW’s acclimation of hatchery Chinook Salmon and summer steelhead smolts—helping imprint young fish and boosting future adult homing success.



Ochoco Preserve project construction, 2024. Photo by DLT.

ODFW began acclimating and releasing smolts at Ochoco Preserve in 2018, processing between 20,000 and 70,000 fish annually. In 2024, ODFW and the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs launched a pilot project releasing surplus hatchery steelhead directly into the Crooked River to help accelerate natural production in the subbasin. Combined with returning acclimated adults and natural-origin fish, strong numbers of steelhead were passed upstream in 2024–2025.

Downstream migrant traps operated by Portland General Electric will help determine whether the pilot effort is producing out-migrating smolts over the next two years.

Pendleton field office update

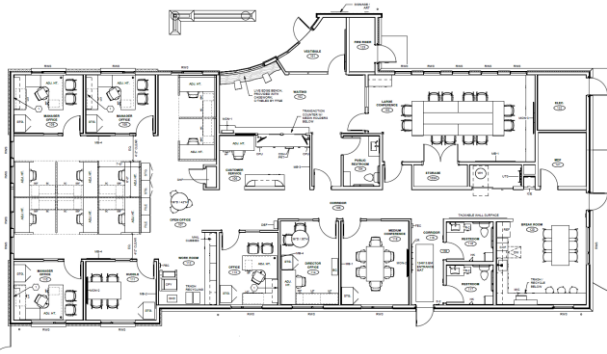
Construction for the new Pendleton office kicked off after the first of the year. Crews started with infrastructure development which included establishing a new road that will service the new ODFW facility as well as the two additional lots that will be made available to future development. All utilities had to be brought into the development footprint as well.



Construction crews working to install utility infrastructure into the development window. The ODFW office footprint is staked out in the foreground.

The new ODFW office is designed to be energy efficient and will include solar panels on the roof for a goal of a net zero facility. Visitors to the facility will find it more welcoming, thanks to the designer’s focus on creating a space where ODFW can better serve its customers. ODFW staff are also excited about the upgrades to staff workspaces which will be a big improvement

over the old office's cramped and outdated workspaces.



The Pendleton office will offer professional, flexible workspace for agency staff needs today and into the future.

Major completion is currently projected to happen in October for the project, with a potential move-in date sometime in November. Staff are preparing for the move, and the eventual sale of current office facilities, with a focus on maximizing efficiency of operations in the future and assessing current assets. As with any long-standing facility, an accumulation of equipment, files and information is being evaluated and streamlined for the eventual move.



Status of office construction as of April 2, 2026.

West Region

Mike Gauvin, Region Manager

White-nose syndrome detected in bats for first time in Oregon

White-nose syndrome (WNS) has been detected in Oregon bats for the first time, with confirmed cases in Columbia and Benton counties. WNS is caused by the fungus *Pseudogymnoascus destructans*, which disrupts normal hibernation

and leads to early emergence, dehydration, and starvation.

This detection follows the 2025 discovery of the fungus in bat guano from a roost in Clatsop County. With these new findings, Oregon now has both confirmed presence of the fungus and bats showing signs of the disease.

In March 2026, the National Wildlife Health Center diagnosed WNS in six Yuma myotis from Columbia County and one little brown myotis from Benton County. These small insect-eating bat species are found throughout Oregon. All individuals were found deceased in residential areas in late winter and were reported to ODFW. White-nose syndrome has killed millions of bats in North America since it was first detected in New York in 2007 and continues to expand its range. At least 30 states have confirmed WNS, while others have detected the fungus without evidence of disease. The fungus spreads primarily through bat-to-bat contact during hibernation, and although it does not cause illness in humans or domestic animals, it can be spread unintentionally on contaminated clothing, gear, or equipment used in caves, mines, or roost sites.

During hibernation, the fungus grows on a bat's skin, causing irritation and damaging tissues. Affected bats wake frequently to groom, burning through the fat reserves they need to survive winter. Many emerge early from their winter sites and may be found weakened or dead. ODFW is actively coordinating with state, local, tribal, and federal partners to better understand and minimize WNS impacts on Oregon's bat populations. Since 2011, ODFW and federal partners—including the National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Forest Service, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service—have conducted statewide surveys for both the fungus and the disease, with support from wildlife rehabilitators and the Oregon Health Authority. These surveys span winter hibernation areas, maternity sites where pups are raised, and other critical roosting habitats.

In response to the recent detections, agency biologists and the ODFW Wildlife Health and Population Lab are identifying additional sites

for follow-up surveys and increasing both bat population monitoring and disease surveillance statewide. ODFW is also working closely with wildlife rehabilitators and the Oregon Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory at Oregon State University, which is screening bat patients and assisting with sample collection.



ODFW's WNS Surveillance Coordinator conducts a hibernacula survey at Oregon Caves National Monument.



A bat is assessed during surveys in Central Oregon.

The Sandy River Smelt Rush

The Sandy River eulachon smelt fishery is one of the region's most popular and unique seasonal events, drawing thousands of participants from Portland-area communities and beyond. The fishery is especially valued for its easy access—located just minutes from Portland—and its appeal to a wide range of culturally diverse families, multigenerational groups, and first-time anglers. Because smelt return to the Columbia every year but only periodically enter the Sandy

River, opportunities to participate are rare, highly anticipated, and often celebrated across many communities.

In anticipation of a possible fishery this year, staff dedicated significant time and coordination to prepare for the strong public interest this event reliably generates. Internal teams and external partners worked closely to ensure that, if the fishery opened, it would be safe, well-organized, and accessible. This proactive planning represented a higher level of readiness than in many previous years, when large crowds and high enthusiasm led to challenging on-the-ground conditions.

Coordination efforts included extensive collaboration with Oregon State Police (OSP), Oregon Department of Transportation, the City of Troutdale, angler-education volunteers, and local, tribal, and federal partners. Together, these groups focused on strengthening communication, improving visitor support, and managing the high level of public participation.

Key improvements this season included installing additional and clearer signage in the following languages: Chinese, English, Korean, Russian, Spanish, and Vietnamese to help participants navigate parking, access points, and regulations. Volunteers and staff were stationed throughout Lewis and Clark Park, Glenn Otto Park, areas along the dike, and the Historic Columbia Highway. Their presence helped welcome new participants, answer questions, reinforce harvest rules, and ease congestion.

The fishery opened for a single day—March 11, from 12–7 p.m.—with a 10-pound limit per dipper, bank-only dip netting, and a valid 2026 Oregon angling license required. Public turnout was strong, underscoring the popularity of this close-to-home fishery, although the smelt run was smaller than expected and overall harvest success remained low.

While biological conditions did not support a robust harvest this year, the high level of interagency coordination resulted in a smooth, well-managed event. The improvements made this season strengthen the framework for future

smelt fisheries and highlight the value of continued partnership, preparation, and support for one of the Portland region’s most beloved and community-rich fishing opportunities.



New signage in multiple languages was displayed on site.

Keeping Diamond Lake Thriving

Umpqua Fish District staff recently released the 2025 Diamond Lake monitoring update, highlighting another year of intensive work to protect one of Oregon’s most popular trout fisheries. In partnership with the Umpqua National Forest and the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality, district staff continue to gather data, remove invasive fish, and closely track the overall health of the lake.

Diamond Lake underwent a rotenone treatment in 2006 that successfully removed an estimated 90 million tui chub. A single tui chub caught during routine monitoring in 2015 signaled the species’ return, prompting renewed management action. To help suppress tui chub, staff began stocking predatory tiger trout in 2016 and brown trout in 2018.

Despite these challenges, Diamond Lake remains a favorite destination for anglers—especially those targeting rainbow trout. In 2025, an

estimated 63,091 rainbow trout were caught and 33,017 harvested. The stocked brown and tiger trout have also become a popular catch-and-release fishery, particularly among fly anglers, who commonly land fish over 25 inches.

To combat illegal introductions of tui chub and golden shiners (*Notemigonus crysoleucas*), ODFW hires two seasonal employees each year to conduct mechanical removals. In 2025, the seasonal crew successfully removed nearly 13,000 tui chub and 55,500 shiners. Although shiners have shown less impact on lake health, this year’s sharp increase in tui chub numbers highlights the need for continued aggressive management. Mechanical removal efforts will continue this summer, and biologists plan to expand research into how effectively tiger and brown trout prey on tui chub of different sizes through isotopic stomach-content analysis.

While the exact current population of tui chub and golden shiners remains unknown, district staff conduct benthic analyses every other year to evaluate macroinvertebrate abundance—a key indicator of ecosystem health. The most recent analysis, completed in fall 2024, showed exceptionally strong results: an average of 469.3 pounds of macroinvertebrates per acre, or 125 percent of the post-rotenone average. By comparison, the lake supported only 11 pounds per acre prior to the 2006 treatment. Staff will conduct the next benthic survey this fall.

For further information, find the full 2025 Diamond Lake monitoring update [here](#).



Umpqua Fish District staff collecting biological data on a tiger trout, a predatory fish stocked to combat the invasive minnow populations.



Staff collect fish from a Fyke net. Trout collected will be measured and released while invasive minnows will be removed from the system.

Staff partner with the City of Ashland to help limit encounters with aggressive deer

Rogue district wildlife staff presented to the Ashland City Council on the increasing number of aggressive urban deer encounters within the city limits. These encounters typically occur in June and early July when does in the area are having their fawns. Most often, it is people walking dogs during this time who are targeted by deer with fawns.

A variety of options were presented including an option for lethal removal under the Urban Pilot Deer Program that was created through the Oregon Senate Bill 373 in 2017.

It gives municipalities in the state an avenue for lethal deer and elk removal if the city has adopted and enforced an ordinance prohibiting the feeding or attracting of wildlife, and made an official ordinance or resolution stating that deer numbers have risen to a level that constitutes a public nuisance.

While the City of Ashland has already adopted a no feeding ordinance, they decided to conduct a larger public outreach campaign as the first step as opposed to jumping right to lethal removal. The hope is that a public awareness campaign could help encourage citizens of the city to change certain behaviors that could be exacerbating the problem, such as intentionally feeding or trying to get close to the deer. More aggressive hazing/harassing options

may also be implemented on the town deer in conjunction with the public outreach. ODFW will continue to work with the city and assist with their outreach attempts.



Does with fawns in the City of Ashland are often aggressive towards people and dogs to protect their young in. The city is creating a campaign to change residents' behavior (such as feeding deer) in hopes of limiting deer aggression.

Oregon State Police

Captain Doug Shugart, Fish & Wildlife Division

Fish and Wildlife Division Member Investigates Unlawful Take of Crab

A Fish and Wildlife Division member was conducting checks on the North Spit of Coos Bay and located numerous shellfish violations at a camp along the bay shore. There were two licensed crabbers in the camp who had 52 Dungeness crabs in their possession, 40 of which were undersized & 6 were females. Twenty of the undersized crabs were already cooking on the camp stove. Both crabbers were cited for exceeding limits of Dungeness Crab, take undersized Dungeness Crab, and possession of female Dungeness Crab. The crabbers were provided with a fishing regulation book and a

measuring device for future trips to the coast prior to their departure



Fish and Wildlife Division member locates unlawful Dungeness crabs in campsite.

Fish and Wildlife Division Members Present at Elevate Oregon Event in Portland

Fish and Wildlife Division members, along with Oregon State Police members representing Explosives Unit, Patrol, SWAT, Crash Reconstruction, K-9, and a Forensics presented at the Elevate Oregon Spring Break event at Parkrose Middle School in Portland. There were approximately 60 kids in attendance who rotated through stations during the 2-hour presentation. Fish and Wildlife Division members manned a station with a Fish and Wildlife truck, ATV and boat along with the Fish and Wildlife Trailer of Shame. This is the second year the Fish and Wildlife Division has participated in this event for East Portland youth, and it was once again very popular with the kids.



Fish and Wildlife Division presentation at Elevate Oregon Spring Break Event.

Fish and Wildlife Division Member Rescues Injured Owl



Fish and Wildlife Division member rescues owl.

Fish and Wildlife Division members received a call regarding an injured owl in the Blue River area. A search of the area resulted in locating the injured owl. The Trooper was able to successfully capture the injured owl, place it in their Fish and Wildlife truck, and transport it to the Cascade Raptor Center in Eugene for assessment and potential rehabilitation.

Fish and Wildlife Division Members Investigate Unlawful Take of Bull Elk

Fish and Wildlife Division members completed an investigation involving the unlawful take of a 6x6 bull elk. The investigation revealed a subject killed the bull elk with his rifle on private property in the Murderers Creek Unit and tagged it with his Archery Elk Tag. The suspect then knowingly falsified his ODFW Mandatory Report Form stating he killed the bull elk during archery season. A Fish and Wildlife member interviewed the suspect, who had moved to the Florence area, and the suspect admitted to killing the bull elk with his rifle and tagging it with his archery tag. The suspect was charged with Unlawful Take Bull Elk and Knowingly Making a False Report to ODFW.



Fish and Wildlife Division members seize 6x6 bull elk

OCEAN SALMON AND COLUMBIA RIVER PROGRAM

Tucker Jones, Ocean Salmon and Columbia River Program Manager (OSCRP)

Greg Huchko, Umpqua Watershed District Manager

Preliminary diet analysis of smallmouth bass in the Coquille River

Smallmouth bass were introduced to parts of Oregon in the late 1800s and managed as a game fish for decades. They have also been implicated as significant predators on native fish species, including salmon. In response, management in some state waters shifted to monitoring their impacts and controlling distribution.

Smallmouth bass were documented in the Coquille River in 2011 and increases in their abundance have been correlated with a major decline in wild Chinook salmon. Due to their predatory impacts elsewhere, ODFW has been interested in understanding the scale of smallmouth bass predation in the Coquille River as a potential contributor to declining Chinook salmon populations.

In June of 2025, OSCRP collaborated with the Umpqua Watershed District to test study methods and look for direct evidence of salmon predation by smallmouth bass in the Coquille River. Smallmouth bass stomachs were sampled according to field and laboratory procedures

from ODFW predation studies in the Columbia River. In the lab, diet items were sorted into the following categories: fish, crayfish, and other invertebrates, then prey fish were identified and counted using bones with distinct characteristics.

Thirty-four smallmouth bass were sampled during two days of sampling. Fish were present in 24 of the diets. One smallmouth bass contained an unidentified species of salmon, and another contained one Chinook (Fig. 1). Fourteen smallmouth bass contained unidentified fish, many of which were recently hatched and too small to identify. Crayfish and other invertebrates were also found in 10 and 18 smallmouth bass, respectively. In addition, diet samples were opportunistically collected from two striped bass. Between the two predators, they consumed one adult sculpin, one adult shad, and 51 juvenile fishes including three Chinook salmon.

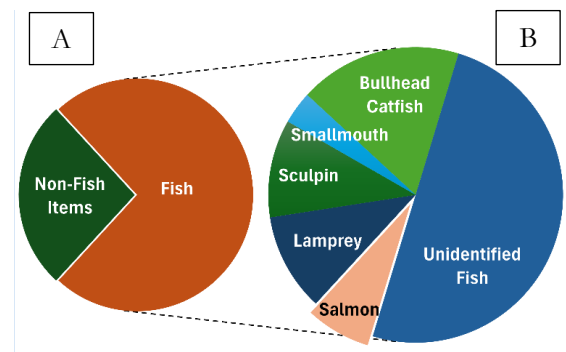


Figure 1. Diet composition of 34 smallmouth bass. A) diet composition of all smallmouth bass and B) prey fish composition for predators with fish in their digestive tracts. The wedge size reflects the number of predators containing those diet items. “Other” includes vegetation and non-crayfish invertebrates.

This preliminary work demonstrates that methods used to assess piscivorous fish diets elsewhere are functional in the Coquille River, confirming salmon predation by smallmouth and striped bass. Future work could include a thorough study during salmon outmigration paired with estimates of smallmouth bass abundance and distribution to clarify impacts from non-native fish predators to salmon in the Coquille River.

**End of field reports for
April 24, 2026**