



OREGON FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION TOUR

TOUR:

Thursday Sept 17, 2026 - 8:00 AM
Hampton Inn and Suites
2830 Mulholland Drive
La Grande, OR 97850

MEETING:

Friday Sept 18, 2026 - 8:00 AM
Eastern Oregon University
Gilbert Event Center
1 University Blvd
La Grande, OR 97850

Finding Balance with Blue Mountain Elk:

Sustainably managing an iconic species in a rapidly changing landscape

Thursday September 17, 2026

Link to tour route: <https://maps.app.goo.gl/1rU7P7qBCGGLo2t88>

Once brought to the brink of extinction, the re-establishment of Rocky Mountain Elk over the past century is one of Oregon's most successful wildlife management stories. Elk are one of our most iconic game species and provide both hunters and wildlife viewers with incredibly memorable experiences and connections to wild spaces. On private lands, perspectives on elk are complex. For some, the presence of elk provides recreational opportunity and adds real value to properties. For others, and especially on working lands, elk cause substantial challenges when large herds can be responsible for damage to crops, forage, and infrastructure.

Elk are highly dependent on the habitats they seek for forage and security. The Blue Mountains are a rapidly changing landscape; driven by climate change, shifts in private landownership, public use and management of federal lands. In recognition of these growing challenges, ODFW is currently undertaking a comprehensive review of elk monitoring and management; beginning with collaring efforts to better understand elk herd ranges and seasonal movements. Much like mule deer, these data will help inform how management may need to adapt in the future.

Sharing personal perspectives and the available science, this tour will emphasize how a variety of factors influence elk distribution across the Blue Mountains and how ODFW works with various stakeholders to preserve the deep cultural legacy of elk and support working lands, both now and into the future.

8:00 AM Hampton Inn and Suites (adjacent gravel lot): Introductions

8:45-9:45 AM Ladd Marsh Overlook: The Grande Ronde Valley and how ecological and social changes have influenced elk distribution.

- Kyle Martin, ODFW Ladd Marsh WA Manager
- Nick Myatt, ODFW East Region Manager

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10:05-11:15 AM

Hampton Family Ranch: First-hand perspectives from landowners and producers on how elk interact with private lands, and how ODFW supports landowners struggling with resource damage.

- Randy Hampton, Landowner and Producer
- Jake Seavert, Union County Commissioner
- Matt Keenan, ODFW District Wildlife Biologist

11:45-1:45 PM

Lunch - Starkey Experimental Forest Headquarters: The importance of elk security, predator impacts, and an overview of ODFW's ongoing review of elk management, including current efforts to collect data that will inform future approaches on a landscape scale.

- Jon Paustian, ODFW East Region Habitat Biologist
- Darren Clark, ODFW East Region Wildlife Research
- Casey Brown, ODFW East Region Wildlife Research
- Nick Myatt, ODFW East Region Manager

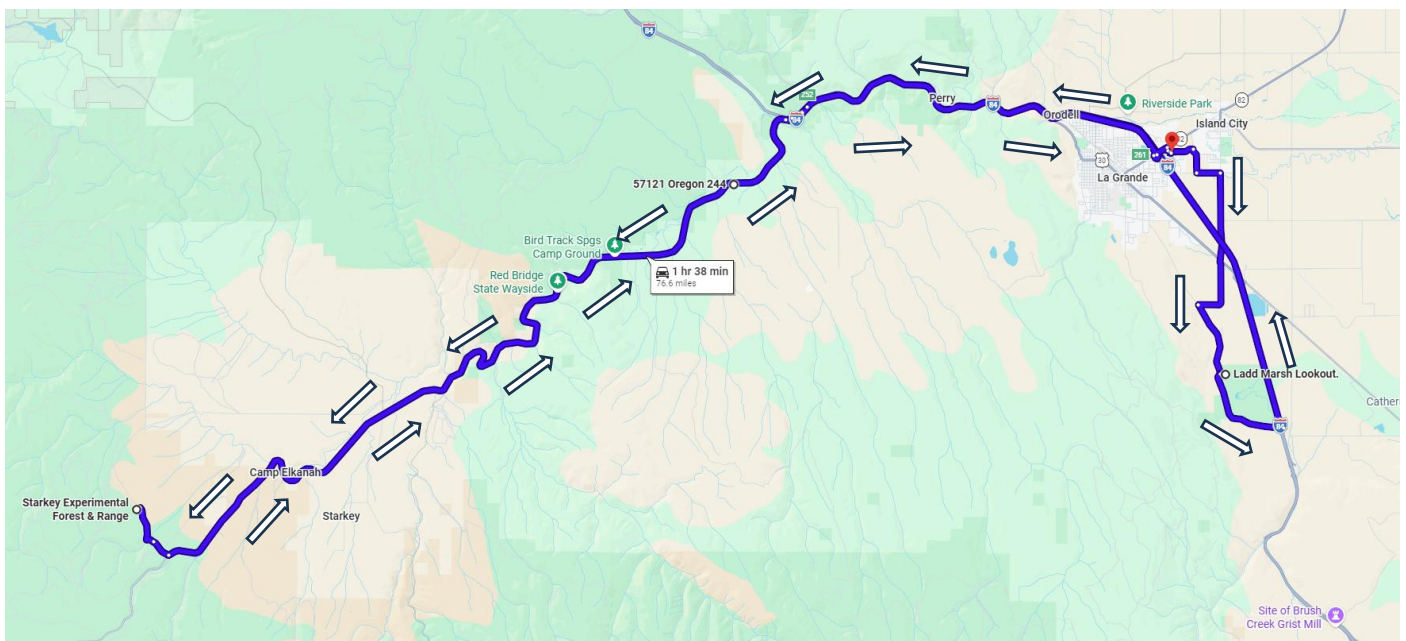
2:00-3:00 PM

Starkey Experimental Forest Thinning Project: How managing forests creates better habitat conditions and incentivizes elk to spend more time on public lands.

- Darren Clark, ODFW East Region Wildlife Research
- Casey Brown, ODFW East Region Wildlife Research
- Josh Smith, ODFW Ungulate Coordinator

3:45 PM

End of Tour – Arrival back at Hampton Inn and Suites



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