



STAFF SUMMARY

Access and Habitat (A&H) – Project Funding Approval

Background

At the December 11 meeting, the department is proposing to ask the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission (Commission) to appoint a hunter representative and landowner representative to the state A&H Board and to consider granting the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (department) director or director's designee specific authority to modify A&H project budgets for 10 previously approved projects to fully cover Department of Administrative Services (DAS)-required insurance costs.

Board member appointments:

The Hunter Representative vacancy was created when Nic Callero was appointed Chair of the A&H Board. Applications were accepted from August 10 through October 2, 2026, with broad statewide recruitment conducted through the agency website, social media, and a public news release. Four individuals submitted applications, and three additional individuals expressed interest but did not apply before the deadline.

The Landowner Representative vacancy was created when Jeff McNerney chose not to reapply to the A&H Board due to other time commitments. Applications were accepted beginning August 10 and were extended once through October 2, 2026, with broad statewide recruitment conducted through the agency website, social media, a public news release, and individual outreach to previous applicants. By the extended deadline, one application was received, and one additional individual expressed interest but did not apply before the deadline.

Insurance payments:

DAS-required insurance sometimes results in a substantial insurance premium cost increase for cooperating landowners. These expenses can create barriers to continued or future participation in A&H access agreements, particularly when insurance quotes increase late in the project development process or when a landowner must secure a new insurance carrier at a higher cost. While existing reimbursement tools address upfront insurance cost increases for the first year of a project, recent projects have demonstrated gaps—specifically for subsequent years of the project and when insurance costs exceed original estimates or surpass existing reimbursement limits.

To address these challenges, the Department will request authority to modify A&H project budgets for 10 previously approved projects to cover the additional cost of required insurance when initial estimates prove insufficient. This authority would apply to previously approved projects: Bear Creek, Iron Mountain, Virtue Flat, Pine Creek Ranch, Mackenzie,

Bunker Hill, Four Mile, Social Ridge, Nichols, and Divide Ridge. Granting this authority will allow timely adjustments to ensure landowners obtain and maintain required insurance coverage, supporting continued participation and protecting public access commitments.

Public involvement

The Access & Habitat Program provides structured and accessible opportunities for public involvement throughout its review and approval process. Regional Council and A&H Board meetings are publicly noticed on the ODFW website, and meeting materials are posted for public review. Members of the public may submit written comments or attend meetings in person or virtually to provide testimony on proposed projects or program-related decisions. The A&H Board meets in Klamath Falls on October 20, 2026, where the proposed insurance-related amendments were reviewed in a public setting.

Overview of proposed Commission action

The Commission would approve or deny the Departments recommendation to appoint a hunter representative and a landowner representative to the state A&H Board.

Under Oregon statute, the Commission is responsible for appointing members to the A&H Board. The statute directs the Commission to appoint hunter representatives to the Board that reflects the broad spectrum of hunters and landowner representatives that represent a broad spectrum of agriculture and timber landowners. Landowner representatives are to be selected from a list of at least five names provided by the Oregon Department of Forestry and the Oregon Department of Agriculture.

The Commission would also approve or deny the Departments request for authority to modify A&H project agreements for the 10 previously approved projects to cover the full, actual cost of required insurance when initial estimates are inadequate.