



Harney County Chapter
Oregon Hunters Association
P. O. Box 1409
Hines, OR 97738

APR 13 2009

April 10, 2009

Oregon Department of State Lands
Attn: Stockade Block Plan Comments
775 Summer St. NE, Ste. 100
Salem, OR 97301-1279

Dear Sirs:

This correspondence represents the comments of the Harney County Chapter of The Oregon Hunters Association on the Draft Area Management Plan (AMP) for the Stockade Block of Common School Fund trust land in southeastern Oregon.

Members of our Chapter attended the DSL meeting held in Burns on Thursday, April 2, 2009 and provided oral comments to the facilitator at that meeting. We felt it necessary to also provide these written comments as a formal record to be used in your Department's revision of the Draft when you prepare the Final AMP.

We understand the Plan Vision and the ultimate plan goal of maximizing possible financial return to the Common School Fund (CSF) for the State of Oregon. These overriding factors obviously led you to the section entitled "Evaluation of Land and Financial Stewardship Opportunities". Within that section is a sub-section that OHA finds very disturbing. The sub-section "Lease for Recreation Uses" has many potential negative impacts to the public lands user in the state of Oregon. The hunting public is a major economic factor, especially in eastern Oregon, where the majority of hunting activities bring in revenues from outside the area. Having public land to hunt is the primary reason for most of the hunting population to travel this far and expend the amount they do on their hunting-related activities.

Maintaining hunter access to both public and private lands is one of the major goals of the Oregon Hunters Association. There are about 11,000 members state-wide, and we have over 200 in the Harney County Chapter. Public access continually rises as one of the top issues facing hunters today. So when we read on page 35 of your document that "leasing hunting rights offered a potential income producing use of the land" we were obviously alarmed. Leasing hunting guide service rights was listed as another possibility to enhance revenue, either exclusive or non-exclusive. These are red flags for hunters and most public land users. The

potential of being denied access to the public lands of the State of Oregon is just not palatable to Oregon hunters.

We find on page 29 of this Draft Plan under Recreation Use Management the following statement: "Recreational and public uses are considered when making management decisions, especially if a decision may involve the closure of areas of state land to general public access and use." The OHA would like to invoke this consideration at this time and in the instance of the potential for leasing out hunting or guiding rights on the Stockade Block. We ask that the description of this leasing potential be dropped from this plan as described on pages 35 and 36. We feel the *impact to public users if limited access is imposed* would be far greater than any financial gain to the CSF. While you have several good ideas in this Financial Stewardship Opportunity section such as wind energy and solar energy, we are strongly opposed to listing the leasing of public recreation uses to gain income to the state treasury.

These arid rangelands in southeastern Oregon are good wildlife habitats for those species that are adapted to them. We enjoy Pronghorn antelope, mule deer, Rocky Mountain elk, and even California bighorn sheep on the fringes of the Stockade Block. Chukar are hunted on much of the Stockade Block as well. Livestock grazing on this open rangeland is the primary use, and the best ecological and financial use in this arid climate. We urge the DSL to continue to manage these public state-owned lands for that Best Use, and not to try exploring outlandish ideas that will ultimately fail after disrupting a major contributing factor to the state economy, the hunters of the state.

Thank you for the opportunity to review your Draft AMP on the Stockade Block. We trust our comments will be taken seriously and incorporated into the Final AMP. Even though the facilitator stated at the Burns meeting that the "leasing of those lands for hunting or guiding would never happen", we would prefer that the opportunity never be allowed to occur sometime in the future when we are not watching management as closely. Removing that possibility from the Draft Plan seems the only way to satisfy our concerns. Please consider doing just that.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Aaron D. Richardson".

Aaron D. Richardson, President
Harney County Chapter OHA