

ANALYSIS

Department of Fish and Wildlife John Day Valley Habitat Restoration

Analyst: Travis Miller

Request: Approve the submission of a grant application to the Foundation for America's Public Lands, a congressionally chartered charitable partner of the Bureau of Land Management, in the amount of \$100,000 to support habitat restoration in the John Day Valley Habitat Area.

Analysis: On November 20, 2025, the Foundation for America's Public Lands released a request for proposals for the Western Big Game Migration and Connectivity Fund. The grant opportunity seeks to increase access to core habitats and migration corridors for big game, restore seasonal winter range habitats, and improve water availability on lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). Eligible projects must be located within state-identified priority areas, within sagebrush habitat, and on BLM-managed land and waters. The foundation anticipates awarding \$600,000 during the current grant cycle, and the grant application deadline is February 4, 2026.

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) is requesting permission to submit a \$100,000 grant application to the foundation to support habitat restoration in the John Day Valley Habitat Area within Grant County, which is one of the five priority areas identified in the 2024 Oregon Action Plan for Improving Big Game Winter Range and Migration Corridors. The proposed project area falls within a planned 4,495-acre BLM fuels reduction project and seeks to enhance winter range habitat for elk and mule deer, as well as sagebrush habitat through targeted herbicide application, native reseeding, and sagebrush sowing.

The grant has a three-year period of performance and requires a 25% non-federal match, which the agency anticipates meeting with a \$20,000 cash match through the Natural and Working Lands Program, and a \$5,000 in-kind match with existing staff.

Recommendation: The Legislative Fiscal Office recommends approval of the request.

Department of Fish and Wildlife Filimoehala

Request: Authorization to apply for a grant of \$100,000 for a project in the John Day Valley Habitat Area from the Foundation for America's Public Lands Western Big Game Migration and Connectivity Fund.

Recommendation: Approve the request.

Discussion: The Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) requests authorization to apply for a grant from the Foundation for America's Public Lands (FAPL), which is a congressionally chartered partner of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The Western Big Game Migration and Connectivity Fund, administered by FAPL, is available to western state game and fish agencies to identify priority migration corridors and needed interventions to support thriving populations of pronghorn, mule deer, and elk. ODFW has proposed a project in the John Day Valley Habitat Area (JDVHA) for funding. In 2024, Oregon created a State Action Plan (SAP) in accordance with the implementation of the U.S. Department of Interior Secretarial Order 3362. The JDVHA is one of five priority areas identified in the SAP.

The proposed project will target juniper encroachment of the existing sagebrush habitat and controlling the spread of invasive annual grass due to juniper encroachment. ODFW expects this project to improve the quality of forage for mule deer as well as maintaining the existing sagebrush habitat that supports wintering ungulate and other sage-obligate species. The grant requires a 25 percent match, which ODFW intends to meet through a combination of cash from the Natural and Working Lands Program and in-kind staff support from an existing ODFW Regional Habitat Biologist. Additional in-kind match is expected to be provided by partners, including the Prineville BLM.

The grant application is due on February 4, 2026, and award notification will occur by April 2026. If successful, ODFW will return to the Emergency Board to request Federal Funds expenditure limitation commensurate with the award. ODFW does not anticipate requiring additional positions or FTE to complete the project.



Oregon

Tina Kotek, Governor

Department of Fish and Wildlife

Office of the Director

4034 Fairview Industrial Drive SE

Salem, OR 97302

(503) 947-6044

FAX (503) 947-6042

odfw.com

January 22, 2026

The Honorable Senator Kate Lieber, Co-Chair
The Honorable Representative Tawna Sanchez, Co-Chair
Joint Committee on Ways and Means
900 Court Street NE, H-178
Salem, OR 97301



Dear Senator Lieber and Representative Sanchez:

Nature of the Request

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) requests approval to submit a federal grant application to the Foundation for America's Public Lands (FAPL) under the Western Big Game Migration and Connectivity Fund in the amount of \$100,000 for the purpose of supporting habitat restoration activities in the John Day Valley Habitat Area in Grant County. This area is one of the five priority areas identified in Oregon's State Action Plan (SAP) for implementation of Department of Interior Secretarial Order 3362.

Background

The Foundation for America's Public Lands, the official Congressionally chartered partner of BLM, launched the 2026 Western Big Game Migration and Connectivity Fund (WBGMCFF) opportunity to address threats to sagebrush habitat and big game movement in State-identified priority areas. To qualify for this program, Oregon developed a SAP in 2024 to identify priority areas.

The requested funds will support habitat restoration activities in the SAP's John Day Valley Habitat Area in Grant County. The project area falls within a planned 4,495-acre BLM fuels reduction project. The BLM project activities will address juniper encroachment of the existing sagebrush habitat, but after treatment there will be a need to control the spread of invasive annual grass and restore sagebrush to areas that have been degraded by juniper expansion. ODFW is seeking funds to increase the effectiveness of the BLM fuels treatment by targeted annual grass herbicide application, native seeding, and sagebrush sowing. By reducing invasive annual grass presence and restoring shrub communities that have been impacted by juniper expansion, this project aims to improve the quality of available forage for mule deer. At the greater landscape level, this project will help maintain existing sagebrush habitat which supports not only wintering ungulates, but sage obligate species throughout the year. Additionally, the project will have positive benefits for rangeland health and reduce fire risk.

This grant application supports ODFW's mission and goals by providing funding to support direct restoration of wildlife habitat and contribute to cooperative partnerships with federal agencies for the benefit of Oregon's fish, wildlife, and their habitats.

Agency Action

Funding applications are due to FAPL by February 4, 2026, with notification of successful applicants by April 2026. Funding will be spent within three years (2029). There is a 25% non-

federal match requirement for this funding opportunity (\$25,000 minimum for this request) and match sources include a \$20,000 cash match from ODFW's Natural and Working Lands Program and an additional \$5,000 in-kind match provided by ODFW Regional Habitat Biologist staff time for project contracting and planning. No additional FTE are requested through this application. Additional in-kind support (non-qualifying) for project planning will be provided by partners including the Prineville Bureau of Land Management. ODFW anticipates making a future request for federal funds expenditure limitation if the grant application is successful.

Action Requested

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) requests approval to submit a federal grant application to the Foundation for America's Public Lands (FAPL) under the Western Big Game Migration and Connectivity Fund in the amount of \$100,000.

Legislation Affected

None

Sincerely,



Debbie Colbert
Director