
From: Mark & Peggy Armstrong [armstrong@highdesertair.com]
Sent: Sunday, April 05, 2009 11:07 AM
To: Stockade Block
Subject: comment on Draft Stockade Block Area Management plan

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Draft Plan. I appreciate the comprehensive nature of the plan and wish you well in setting guidelines for the area for the next 20 years or so. I will take time to address only one portion of the plan and that has to do with the potential to increase revenues through leasing hunting rights on the area. On the surface it appears to be a legitimate consideration as are a number of the proposed revenue gaining ideas. However, I am definitely against turning that area into a fee for hunting/hunting club/non public hunting managed area. Those types of areas then become non-public lands and result in reducing hunting opportunities for the average person. It certainly would be a source of angry public opinion as to the intent of State Government. It is already difficult for most hunters to stomach private hunting only on private lands, given the fact that all of the fees each hunter pays now fund the Oregon Department of Wildlife and their very competent management efforts to improve wildlife, big game, fishing, and non game species habitats throughout the state. Remember, the money we pay as hunters and fishermen and citizens of this state affects all ownerships and would continue to affect the presence of wildlife which reside within, migrate through, or otherwise depend on those habitats within the Stockade Block.

I would also have a concern relating to the management of a private, pay to hunt program on the Stockade block (or any State land tract) that the private organization or individual who would be paying for that exclusive arrangement would out of necessity block travel throughout the area, preventing access to other adjacent public lands. I did not see this as an issue to be analyzed by the Plan. This is exactly what most private hunting arrangements have done in Eastern Oregon. There are roads that access BLM holdings for instance that would likely not be open to the public. The Stockade Block is right in the center of very important wildlife areas which are popular for big game hunting.

In the worst case scenario, allowing privatization of management of the hunting on this area would be a private lock up of public land which would create a losing scenario for the average hunter and for any other person who might not be a hunter but simply would want to travel in the area for any other legitimate use.

I realize the need for more school funding and fully understand the importance of finding ways to increase revenue and the Stockade Block and other areas should indeed be looked at for possibilities. However, it might be a better idea to coordinate with ODFW and develop a lottery system with incentives for a set number of people to want to purchase an opportunity to hunt one of these areas. Examples might be to have an extended season, to have multiple species hunts, or other possible desirable opportunities for the hunter.

Thanks for reading my comments. I will try to follow this Plan as it is developed. I hope there will be more publicity in the future of this process. I only heard about the Draft plan via an e-mail from some very upset hunters and didn't have time to change plans so I could attend the public meeting held here in Burns. I will be more alert from now on!!

Mark L. Armstrong