

**ASHLAND CITY COUNCIL
STUDY SESSION MINUTES
Monday, March 2, 2026**

Mayor Graham called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

Council Present: Mayor Graham, Councilors Dahle, DuQuenne, Hansen, Kaplan, and Sherrell.

Council Absent: Bloom.

Staff Present:

Sabrina Cotta	City Manager
Alissa Kolodzinski	City Recorder
Tighe O'Meara	Police Chief

I. Call to Order

II. Reports and Presentations

- a. *Amigos Club Update - Jay Tapp, President of the Amigos Club in Ashland, will provide an update on the Sister City program with Guanajuato, Mexico.*

Tapp presented (presentation attached) an update on Ashland's 55-year sister city relationship with Guanajuato, Mexico. He reported that over 1,200 exchange students have participated in the program between the University of Guanajuato and Southern Oregon University. Tapp highlighted 2025 activities including the renewal of the sister city proclamation during June visits to Guanajuato and the successful hosting of Guanajuato's delegation in Ashland during July 4th festivities. The club launched a new Amigo Club Opportunity Fund to support educational and cultural exchanges beyond traditional university pathways, already assisting two students. The Amigo Club is pursuing grants to expand programming and is planning the return of Guanajuato Nights as a fundraiser. The community ambassador program will continue selecting a 2026 representative, with discussions underway to expand it into a year-long leadership program.

Tapp requested council members join the Amigo Club and collaborate on planning 2026 delegations for June and July visits. He emphasized the importance of maintaining visibility and alignment with city goals while strengthening the partnership. Council members who had visited Guanajuato praised the program's impact. The council expressed support for continued collaboration, and several members indicated interest in participating in future delegations.

- b. *Information on the Deer Population - Mathew Vargas, Rogue District Wildlife Biologist, from the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, will present on the deer population.*

Vargas presented (presentation attached) data on human-wildlife conflicts in Ashland, focusing on deer populations. His district receives several hundred wildlife conflict reports annually, with 2022 being the highest complaint year on record.

Complaints primarily involve sick, injured, or dead animals, with human safety incidents spiking during June-July fawning season when does become protective. Ashland reports more deer-human safety

calls than other regional cities, likely due to its proximity to forested and wilderness areas. Vargas outlined control methods, noting that relocation is ineffective due to high mortality rates and deer's ability to travel up to 40 miles. Contraceptives are not viable for open populations like Ashland's. The Oregon Urban Deer Pilot Program allows cities to petition for kill permits after adopting wildlife feeding ordinances and declaring deer a public nuisance.

He recommended increased public awareness emphasizing that deer are wildlife, not pets, and promoting hazing techniques like sprinklers and noise makers to restore natural wariness. Enforcement of existing feeding ordinances (Class 1 violation with maximum \$500 fine) was suggested for persistent violators.

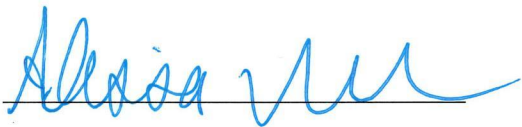
Council members expressed concern about potentially underreported incidents and discussed the need for comprehensive public education campaigns covering both deer and bear interactions. Discussion included potential mandatory bear-proof containers for areas with frequent bear activity, though concerns were raised about cost impacts on residents.

Police Chief O'Meara confirmed existing protocols for lethal removal when public safety is threatened and noted ongoing collaboration with Oregon State University on community engagement surveys regarding wildlife feeding patterns.

Graham summarized City Council direction for staff which is to proceed with developing a public awareness campaign aimed to educate and reduce deer and bear interactions with the public.

III. Adjournment of Study Session.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:04 pm.



City Recorder Alissa Kolodzinski



Mayor Tonya Graham

People-to-People



Ashland y
Guanajuato

STRENGTHENING THE ASHLAND–GUANAJUATO SISTER CITY RELATIONSHIP

PREPARED BY: JAY TAPP, PRESIDENT, AMIGO CLUB OF ASHLAND

Ashland–Guanajuato Sister City Update

Presented by: Amigo Club President, Jay Tapp March 2, 2026

- 2025 Activities
- Exchanges
- Cultural Projects
- 2026 Events



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The Amigo Club Today

- Celebrating 56 years of Ashland–Guanajuato partnership
- **Mission:** cultural exchange, educational opportunity, and community connection
- New momentum through student programs, arts initiatives, and civic collaboration



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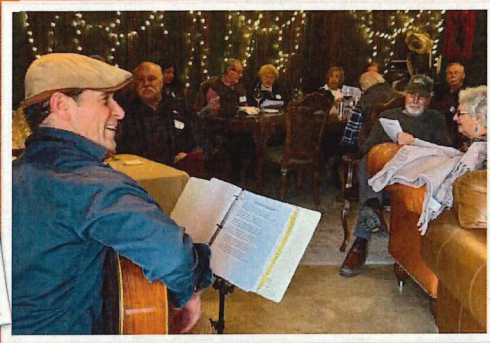
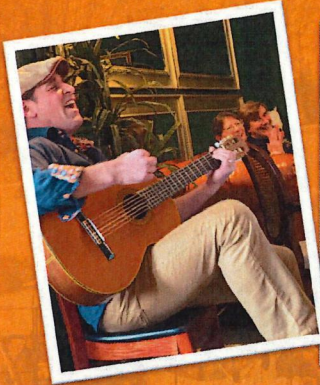
Amigo Club 2025 Key Activity Round up



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“Amigo Mingle” Event

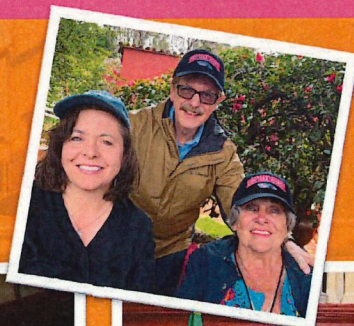
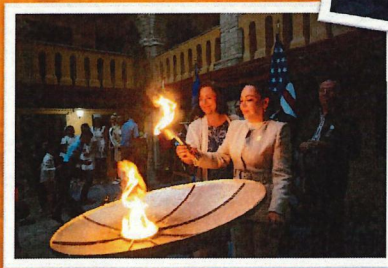
- Wine Tasting, Tapas and Spanish Songs Sing-Along



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June Visit to Guanajuato

- Sister City Renewal – Celebrating 55 Years of Sisterhood.
- Official proclamations from Guanajuato.
- Ashland City delegation and citizens delegation were in attendance



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July Visit to Ashland

- Sister City Renewal – Celebrating 55 Years of Sisterhood.
- Official proclamations from Ashland
- SOU welcome reception breakfast
- Guanajuato City delegation and citizens delegation were in attendance



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SalsAmigo Benefit Dance

- Amigo Club Fundraising Event featuring local dance band sensation – Salsa Brava!

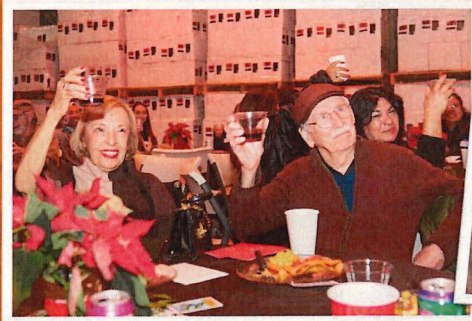
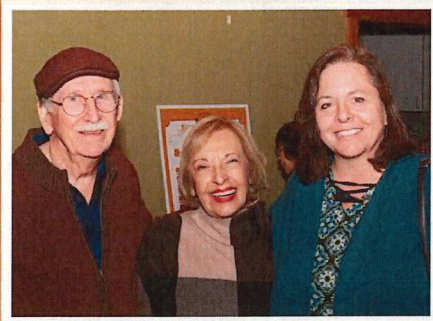


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Amigo Mingle Event

A Toast To The Turners – Honoring Mina and Kernan Turner

- Recognized for **15+ years of service** to the Amigo Club
- Leadership in strengthening exchanges, supporting students, and preserving the sister-city legacy



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Amigo Club Opportunity Fund (ACOF)

This fund is designed to support **flexible, mission-aligned opportunities**—including student exchanges, arts and theater programs, community sports initiatives, and other cultural projects—that reflect the values and vision of the Amigo Club. While our historic relationship with the University of Guanajuato remains vitally important, this fund expands our reach to include **high school exchanges, community-based programs, and direct enrollment in Southern Oregon University exchanges**, beyond affiliation with the University of Guanajuato.



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Amigo Club Opportunity Fund (ACOF)



Two-track structure:

- **Educational Exchange Track** – high school exchanges, SOU pathways, leadership development
- **Cultural Exchange Track** – arts, music, theater, sports, civic collaborations



Early impact:

- Already supported **two students who would not have qualified for SOU endowment scholarships**:
 - Karen López Villanueva
 - Sebastián Hicks Rojas
- Ensures fairness, transparency, and mission alignment



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Grants to Help Our Mission Thrive!

Pursuing Grants as a Core Strategy

- One of our key focus areas is expanding funding through **targeted grant opportunities**
- We have an **active Grant Writing Committee** dedicated to identifying and pursuing regional and national funding sources
- The committee has consulted with longtime expert **Debra Moon**, whose guidance has strengthened our approach and competitiveness

Progress to Date

- **Four grant applications submitted** so far
- Additional grants currently in development and scheduled for submission in 2026
- Goal: diversify funding to support **student exchanges, cultural programming, and community initiatives**



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Global Innovation Scholars Program (SOU–UG)

- Launching **Spring 2026**
- Supported by SOU endowment
- Focus: business innovation, leadership, cultural understanding

Exchange Dates:

- SOU students in Guanajuato: **April 17–26, 2026**
- UG students in Ashland: **May 2–10, 2026**



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Global Innovation Scholars Program (SOU–UG)



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Guanajuato Nights 2026

Saturday, May 9 • Rogue River Room, SOU • Theme: ¡Vivan Los Estudiantes!

Program Highlights:

- Celebrating 2026 GIS cohort of students
- Student performance coordinated by **Señora Chela**
- Live and silent auctions supporting student programs

Honorees:

- **Juan Carlos Romero Hicks** – Visionary Award
- **Dr. Richard Bailey** – Visionary Award
- **Frances Seikman Romero** – Benefactor Award



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Community Ambassador Program

- Led by **Señora Chela** in partnership with Ashland High School
- Selecting a **2026 Community Ambassador** to represent Ashland in Guanajuato
- Ambassador will participate in July festivities in Ashland
- Discussions underway to expand into a **year-long mentorship and leadership program**



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Summer 2026 Sister City Exchanges

June 17–26 — Ashland Delegation to Guanajuato

- Invitation of the Mayor to Ashland representative to attend **Presa de la Olla** festivities
- Opportunities for civic, cultural, and educational engagement with Guanajuateneses
- Delegation composition and logistics need timely discussion

July 4 Week — Guanajuato Delegation to Ashland

- Aligns with U.S. July 4th and **250th anniversary** celebrations
- Chance to highlight the sister-city relationship on a national stage
- Planning needed for hosting, programming, and visibility



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Cultural Art Projects

Guanajuato Heart Sculpture

- Gifted during the July 2025 delegation visit
- Final installation site in Ashland pending

Cervantes Plaque Project

- Led by the **Ashland Playwright Art Walk Committee**
- Commemorative plaques honoring **Miguel de Cervantes**
- Installations planned in both Ashland and Guanajuato

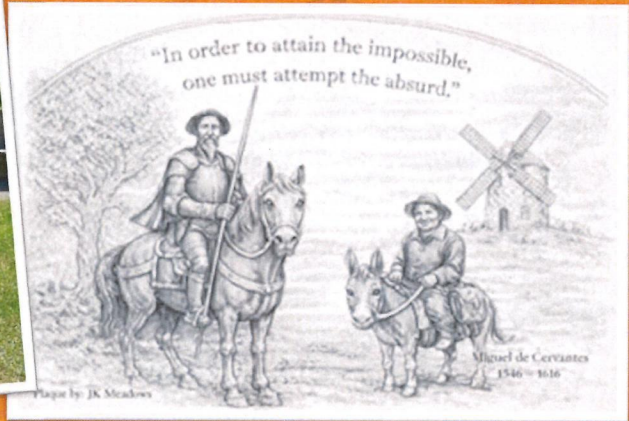
AIFF and GIFF

- initial working with Gary Kout on his idea of establishing a best of GTO films week



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Cultural Art Projects



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A History of Sister City Connection

- Ashland Mayors Visiting Guanajuato since 1969:

- Charles H. McKeen
- Archie C. Fries
- Gary L. Prickett
- L. Gordon Medaris
- Cathy Golden Shaw
- Alan DeBoer
- John Morrison
- John Stromberg
- Julie Akins
- Tonya Graham



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What We Need from Council

- Support for 2026 delegation planning (June & July)
- Coordination with City staff on hosting logistics
- Visibility and alignment with Ashland's cultural and civic priorities
- Continued administrative partnership in strengthening the sister-city relationship



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Closing

Ashland and Guanajuato share a living, evolving partnership. 2026 is a year of opportunity, visibility, and renewed connection.

Thank you for your support.



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URBAN DEER IN OREGON



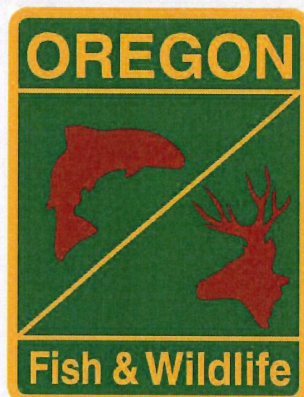
Mathew Vargas

Rogue District Wildlife Biologist

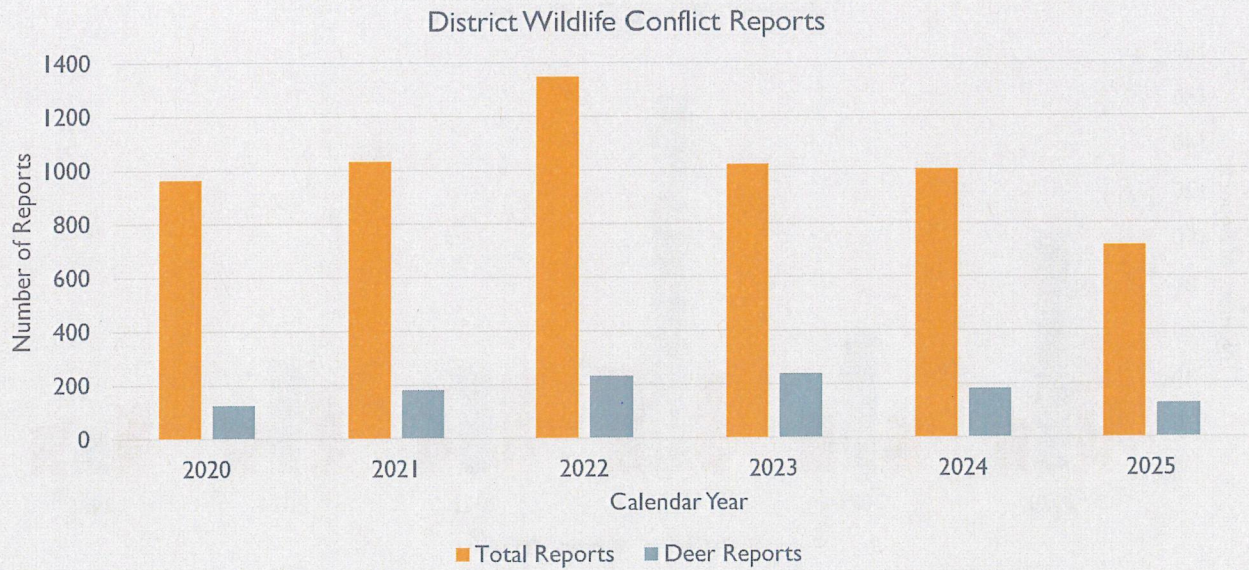
Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife

OREGON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE'S MISSION:

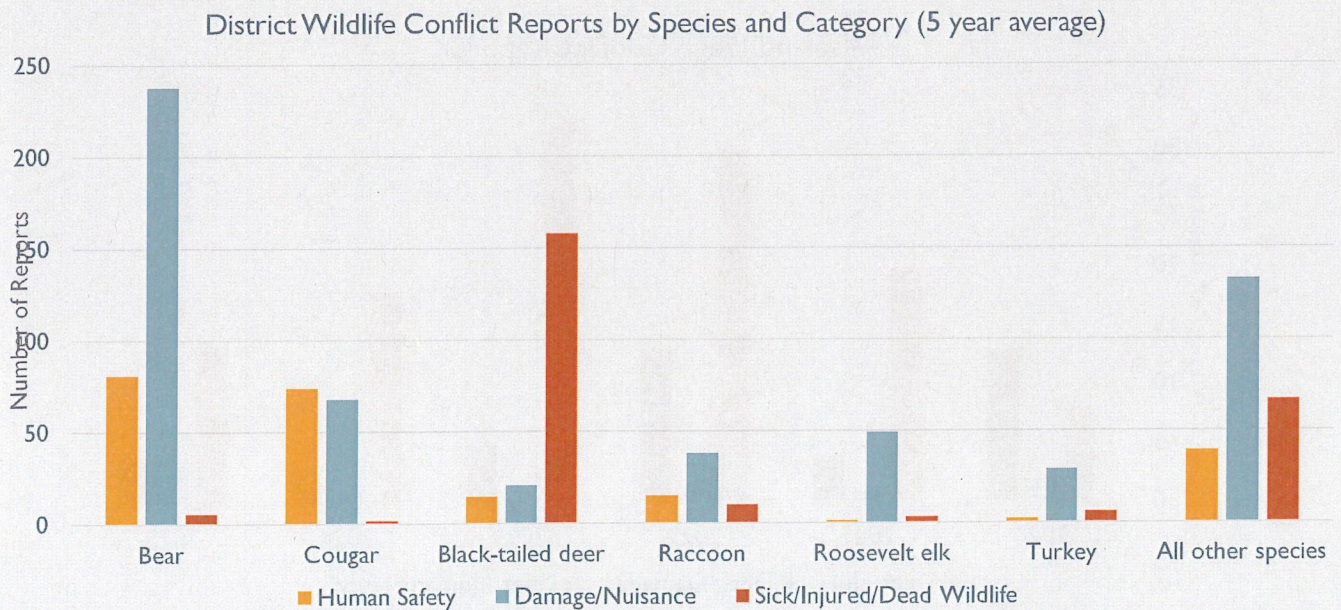
Our mission is to protect and enhance Oregon's fish and wildlife and their habitats for use and enjoyment by present and future generations.



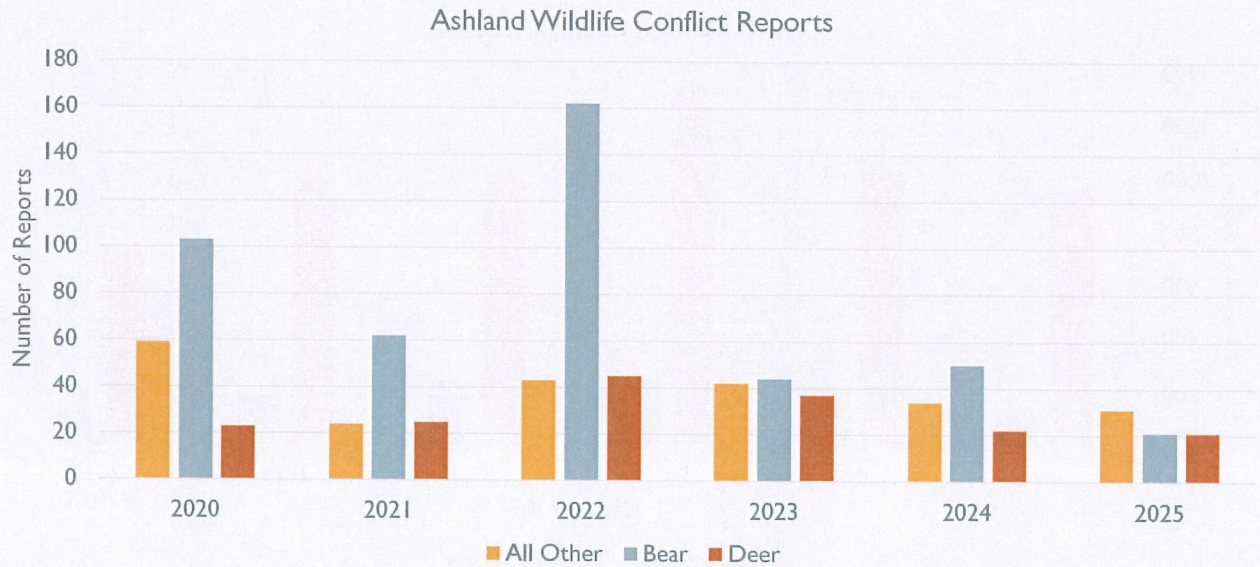
WILDLIFE-HUMAN CONFLICT: ROGUE WATERSHED



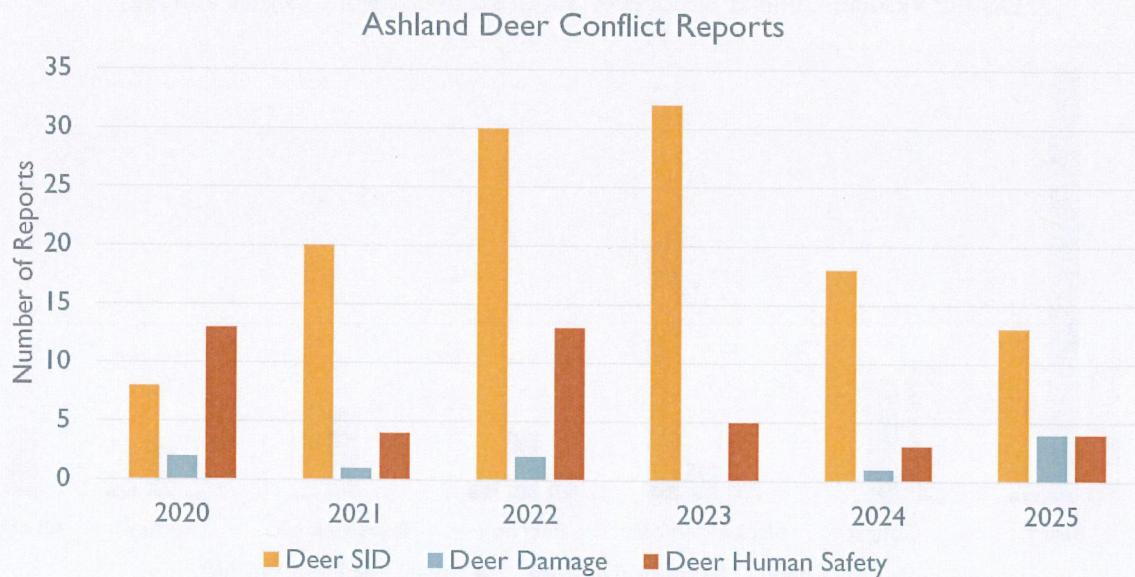
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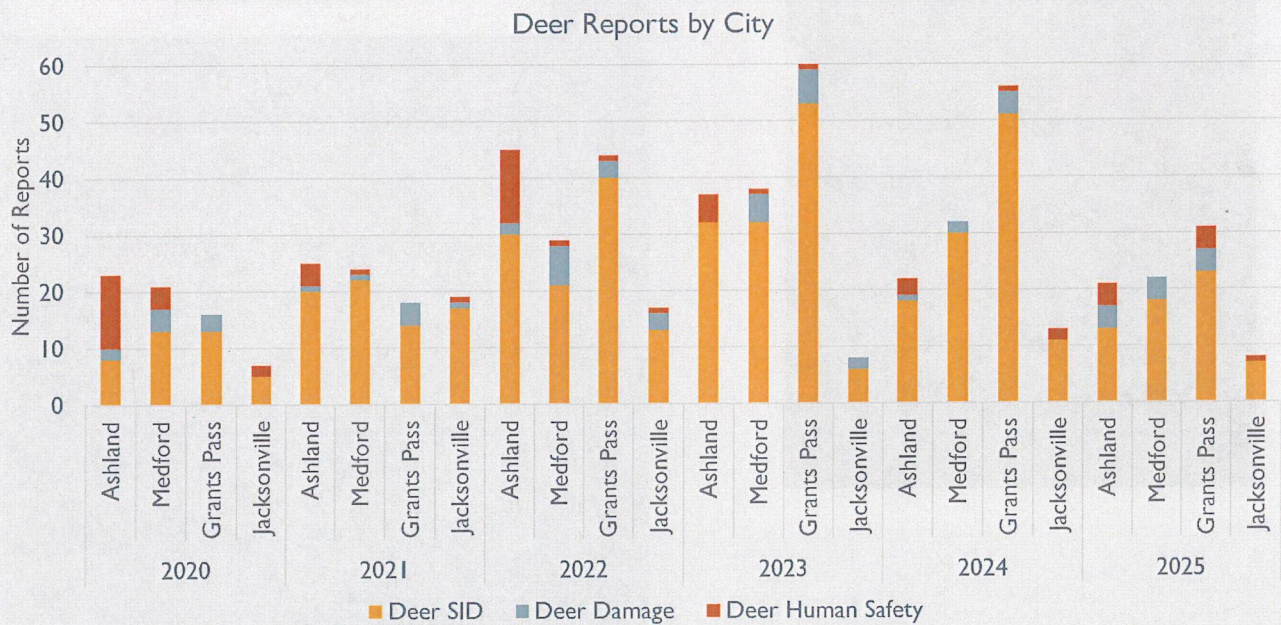
WILDLIFE-HUMAN CONFLICT: CITY OF ASHLAND



WILDLIFE-HUMAN CONFLICT: CITY OF ASHLAND



WILDLIFE-HUMAN CONFLICT: CITY OF ASHLAND



CONTROL METHODS

- **Aggressive hazing/harassing**
 - Deer are not pets, but some people would think so
- **Relocation**
 - Dangerous for animals being moved
 - Dangerous for individuals already residing in areas where they are being moved to
 - May return
 - May become someone else's problem
- **Lethal removal**
 - Unfavorable public perception
- **Contraceptives**
 - Costly
 - Not effective in open populations
 - Does nothing for deer already present





URBAN DEER PILOT PROGRAM

- **Oregon Senate Bill 373 (2017)**
 - Urban deer pilot program under ORS 498.012
- **ODFW Commission developed rules under OAR Chapter 635, Division 43**
 - 635-043-0250
 - 635-043-0260
 - 635-043-0270
 - 635-043-0280
 - 635-043-0290

URBAN DEER PILOT PROGRAM

City can petition ODFW for kill permits after:

1. City adopts and enforces an ordinance restricting placing, depositing, storing or scattering food, garbage, or any other attractant so as to knowingly constitute a lure, attractant, or enticement for deer or elk.
2. Adopt an ordinance, resolution or order declaring that deer or elk populations have risen to levels that constitute a public nuisance.

OAR 635-043-0260



URBAN DEER PILOT PROGRAM

BE ADVISED

AN AGGRESSIVE DEER WAS
REPORTED IN THIS AREA

ON _____



IF YOU ENCOUNTER AN AGGRESSIVE DEER:

STOP: Never approach a deer at any time for any reason. If you see fawns in the area be aware that protective does (female deer) may be nearby.

GIVE IT SPACE: Give any deer you encounter space to escape. Step off the trail or path and walk away.

KEEP PETS AWAY: Aggressive deer are likely to attack your pet, especially small dogs, and have been known to attack people.

KEEP CHILDREN CLOSE: Always keep small children close when you know an aggressive deer is in the area.

IF A DEER ATTACKS YOU:

FIGHT BACK: In the unlikely event that you are attacked, fight back; shout be aggressive, use rocks, sticks and hands, escape to cover when you have a chance.

BE PREPARED: If you know you are going for a walk or hike in an area with human habituated deer carry a walking stick, whistle or other noise maker, leave small dogs at home and consider hiking with two or three others.

For more information on living with deer go to:

www.dfw.state.or.us/wildlife/living_with_deer_elk.asp

Report aggressive animals in residential areas to your Local Police Department, Oregon State Police or Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife.



ODFW Responsibilities

- Designate dates when take is allowed
- Determine the number and sex of deer or elk to be taken
- Issue the appropriate kill permits to the city

City Responsibilities

- Designate areas within the city limits where deer or elk are to be taken
- Designate the manner of taking deer or elk, which may be by use of firearms or by live capture

Any deer or elk taken, to the extent feasible, shall be salvaged and delivered to a "food bank or other charitable organization" for distribution. Any processing and distribution fees shall be at the expense of the city.

SUMMARY/RECOMMENDATIONS

- Increase public awareness and knowledge
- Recommend and conduct aggressive hazing activities
 - "Deer are not your pets"
- Utilize Ashland Municipality Code 9.08.280
 - Feeding of deer, raccoon, wild turkey, and potential habituation of wildlife prohibited within the city limits of Ashland.
- If problem persists ODFW will assist the city in acquiring kill permits under the Urban Deer Pilot Program

BE ADVISED!

AGGRESSIVE DEER IN AREA.

Date: _____

Aggressive deer have been reported in the area. Please follow these safety tips

VIEW WILDLIFE FROM A DISTANCE.
Never approach deer.

KEEP DOGS ON LEASH.
Your dog is safer on a leash.

LEAVE THEM BE.
Don't pick up fawns. Does protect their fawns and will return.

DON'T FEED WILDLIFE.
Deer fed by people can become aggressive.

STAY ALERT.
Especially at dawn and dusk.

Report aggressive deer to: _____

