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### OSP Columbia Basin Team Recognized as Fish & Wildlife Division's "Team of the Year" for 2013

June 9, 2014

Captain Jeff Samuels  
Fish & Wildlife Division  
(503) 934-0221



Photograph (left to right: Senior Trooper Mike Mayer, Senior Trooper Marv Ritter, Senior Trooper Greg Sherman, Sergeant Tim Brown, Senior Trooper Brian Jewett, Senior Trooper Earl Connell, Senior Trooper Dain Gardner)

The Oregon State Police Fish and Wildlife Division recognized the outstanding work of troopers from the Columbia Basin Team based out of the Pendleton Area Command office when Captain Jeff Samuels announced last week that the team was the recipients of the Division's "Team of the Year" award for 2013. This is the eighth presentation of the award since the Division implemented a program to celebrate and recognize the outstanding teamwork by OSP Fish and Wildlife troopers in protecting Oregon's natural resources.

The seven-member Columbia Basin Team supervised by Sergeant Tim Brown is assigned to work the John Day, Heppner, Hermiston and Pendleton areas. Team members, with a combined 99 years of law enforcement experience, are:

- \* Sergeant Tim Brown
- \* Senior Trooper Earl Connell
- \* Senior Trooper Dain Gardner
- \* Senior Trooper Brian Jewett
- \* Senior Trooper Mike Mayer
- \* Senior Trooper Marv Ritter
- \* Senior Trooper Greg Sherman

"The Columbia Basin Team has a vast and diverse area to cover including the Columbia River and mountain forests to desert environments, with a wide variety of species to protect while also providing professional rural law enforcement services. This team is very capable and able to tackle any investigation through a great team effort and a passion for the job. I am very impressed at their level of teamwork, dedication, service to the public, and protection of natural resources," said Samuels.

During 2013, the Columbia Basin Team had several notable cases pointed out by East Region Fish and Wildlife Division Lieutenant Don Wagner in nominating the team for special recognition.

"The Columbia Basin Team is perhaps one of the most well-rounded teams in the State and consistently seeks out and investigates complex criminal cases, demonstrating service that surpasses ordinary standards," said Wagner.

A few of the highlights noted by Wagner include:

\* An investigation initiated in late 2012 lasting over a year into a report of ongoing illegal hunting activities at a NE Oregon area ranch. The investigation alleges several individuals connected with the ranch conducted fee hunts associated with an illegal guide operations involving numerous wildlife violations and other associated crimes. The ongoing investigation involving 20 Fish and Wildlife troopers coordinated from all over the State may lead to over 200 counts of criminal and wildlife charges.

\* Another ongoing investigation into suspected serial poaching involves a suspect believed to be hunting on a suspended hunting license and involved in other crimes across multiple venues. The investigation to date has involved OSP troopers from all three divisions (Patrol, Criminal, and Fish and Wildlife) and currently leading to the seizure of more than 25 trophy deer and elk antlers, vehicles, firearms and other evidence.

\* Team member, Senior Trooper Mike Mayer, was one of the 3 OSP troopers awarded the Medal of Valor and the Department's Lifesaving Award for extraordinary actions and lifesaving efforts during the December 2012 multi-fatal tour bus crash along Interstate 84 east of Pendleton.

To learn more about the OSP Fish and Wildlife Division, including a link to monthly newsletters highlighting the work of your OSP Fish and Wildlife troopers, go to our website at: <http://www.oregon.gov/OSP/FW/index.shtml>.

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