

Submitter: Chad Karges  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: House Committee On Higher Education  
Measure: HB3017

Good afternoon Chair Lively and members of the committee my name is Chad Karges and I am a Board member of the High Desert Partnership located in Harney County.

From 1999 to 2020 I worked at the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in both the Assistant Refuge Manager and the Refuge Manager positions. Throughout my tenure at the Refuge and up until today I have been involved in creating collaborative forms and the necessary support mechanisms that enable diverse interest to solve complex issues.

Shortly after my arrival in Harney County it became apparent that failed relationships were resulting in litigation being used as the primary tool to resolve land management issues in the County. It was this dynamic that resulted in local rancher Gary Marshall and myself to looking to other parts of the Western United States to find better ways to do business. This desire to find a better way resulted in Gary Marshall and myself cofounding the High Desert Partnership. It was recognized that a relationship based collaborative process could be a path for the future in Harney County.

Through the success of natural resource collaboratives as well as diversifying the Board of Directors of the High Desert Partnership, it became clear that long-term success had to equally include collaborative efforts in the areas of economics and social well being. The High Desert Partnership works to support the three legs necessary for community well being. These legs are ecological, social and economic. Working on all three legs simultaneously as well as beginning to intentionally link them together is something that is rare and maybe even unique in the State.

This approach is solving today's complex issues through collaboration based on trusting relationships created by shared learning. The High Desert Partnership is already enabling shared learning to happen within each of the collaboratives and is now beginning to enable it to occur across collaboratives. There is also the possibility this process could be shared beyond Harney County.

The creation of the High Desert Partnership began almost two decades ago. During that time it has grown from an idea into an organization with multiple collaborative success and creative possibilities for the future. Investing in the High Desert Partnership as a place based collaborative center while working collaboratively with the Statewide resources of Oregon Consensus there is an opportunity to not only enhance the collaborative culture of Harney County but also use shared learning to create a foundation for collaborative culture beyond the County.

