



February 24, 2023

To: House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources and Water

Re: Support of HB 3222

Chair Helm, Vice Chairs, and members of the Committee,

I am writing to you to ask for your support of HB 3222 and would like to use this opportunity to give a brief background of the Harney Basin Wetlands Collaborative, the collaborative that will be directly influenced by HB 3222.

The Harney Basin Wetlands Collaborative was formed in 2011 and focuses on improving aquatic health and sustainability of Malheur Lake, and the flood irrigated wet meadows across the Harney Basin. Working to restore and enhance healthy lands and water, while nurturing the rural way of life.

This collaborative conducts research, restoration projects, and monitoring that helps guide decisions toward restoring Malheur Lake and improving the flood irrigated wet meadows. It also supports landowners as they make changes in water management, and infrastructure upgrades, that not only benefit the landowner but also the millions of birds that use the Harney Basin as a rest stop along their migratory route.

Along with increased community engagement, the understanding of the ecological science of both Malheur Lake and flood irrigated wet meadows has increased significantly over the last few years.



This collaborative effort is led by a diverse group of stakeholders, including local ranchers, conservation organizations, the Sovereign Nation of the Burns Paiute Tribe, government agencies, scientists, area residents, nonprofit partners, and others who share a love and concern for the Harney Basin.

The collaborative space makes it possible for diverse interests to make better decisions that benefit the environment and the community. Harney County knows the importance of the resources it has, including Malheur Lake and the wet meadow systems that surround it. Not only as a productive area for agriculture but also as a productive area for wildlife. It doesn't have to be one or the other.

Harney Basin Wetlands Collaborative has been together for 12 years and have faced various tests over time and what we've learned is the simple acts of building relationships and talking about complex issues can be effective ways to reach consensus and find solutions. This is how we have built a culture of collaboration.

The Harney Basin's challenges are not insurmountable, because of the unified collaborative partners that are working to address the intricate issues in the Harney Basin. Harney Basin Wetland Collaborative has built strong relationships, has momentum to work on these issues, and will continue to work together across private and public lands for common benefits.

Sincerely,

Melissa Petschauer

Harney Basin Ecological Coordinator, High Desert Partnership