



April 27, 2023

To: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Session on 4/28/2023 at Four Rivers Cultural Center, Ontario, OR

**For: HB 3017 – Value of Investing in Collaboration in Harney County and Oregon
HB 3022 - Water is the Connector to Everything in SE Oregon High Desert**

Dear Co-Chairs Steiner and Sanchez and members of the committee,

HB 3017 Expanding Collaboration in SE Oregon

High Desert Partnership in Harney County is a force for rural community progress and an oasis of collaboration in a desert. We appreciate this committee meeting in different communities across the state. Ontario is our closest neighbor to the east but is still 120 miles from Harney County. We are almost the only thing between here and there. Our county and communities are considered “frontier rural”. This request is about connecting, engaging and growing community place-based resources that will lead to greater ecological resilience, economic growth, and social vitality in remote rural communities while reducing the potential for litigation logjams.

Here in Harney County, you will find things that you probably can't find anywhere else in Oregon and quite possibly anywhere in the U.S. This includes a culture of collaboration that has been brewing for over 20 years. High Desert Partnership has been leading the way in building community and a culture of collaboration. HB 3017 affords an unique opportunity to expand the culture of collaboration that exists in southeast Oregon while making it possible for all of Oregon to learn and benefit from High Desert Partnership's brand of collaboration to develop their collaborative cultures. We are poised to work with Oregon Solutions to expand collaborative model to assist rural communities with limited resources and people to help solve issues in their own communities for win-win solutions while reducing the potential for litigation logjams.

HB 3022 Harney Basin Wetlands Collaborative

Water is the connector to everything in SE Oregon. This collaborative supported by High Desert Partnership brings together diverse partners from all across Oregon and the region working across land ownership boundaries that represents some of the most important migratory and breeding habitat for bird species in the Western United States. With climate change, these wetlands are at extreme risk for habitat degradation that would be catastrophic for birds on the Pacific Flyway. HB 3222 will provide direct support to the projects that the Harney Basin Wetlands Collaborative partners are engaging in to develop landscape scale restoration in the Harney Basin. The funding being requested will be matched more than 2:1 by direct investment by partner organizations. This funding will sustain this critically important landscape in Oregon.

We recognize the hard decisions this committee makes, as there are many needs, but we thank you for the consideration of the collaborative culture and work in SE Oregon.

Sincerely,

Brenda Smith

Brenda Smith, Ph.D.

Director, High Desert Partnership

*“In a nation staggering to find its center of gravity, Harney County proved the power of a community that knows how to work together.”
from Sagebrush Collaboration*