



March 26, 2025

TO: House Committee On Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources and Water

RE: Community Convening Support for House Bill 3800 - Relating to Use of Groundwater in the Harney Basin

Dear Co-Chairs Helm and Owens and Members of the Committee,
Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to provide support for the "community convening aspects" of HB 3800. The complexity of water issues in the Harney Basin is unprecedented.

My name is Brenda Smith, director at High Desert Partnership. I have been involved in the Harney Community Place-based Planning from the beginning, when as a board member of the Harney County Watershed Council we applied for one of the first pilot project grants. For nearly a decade a diverse group of partners in Harney County have been harnessing the power of our communities to help solve our water issues. I also served on the Harney Groundwater Study Advisory Committee. In addition, I am a member of the OWRD Division 512 Rules Committee process. My interest in serving in all these capacities is not because I am irrigating or have water rights in the basin, it is because I wish for our residents to be part of the solution to these complex water issues.

High Desert Partnership is willing to offer a collaborative process to convene a groundwater adaptive management group as a way to continue to include our community in the solutions to manage groundwater. The benefit of High Desert Partnership convening this group is that it is a pathway to implement the groundwater plan within the new rules that are facing groundwater use in the basin. An adaptive management plan also allows for gathering information on specific areas being managed to identify effective strategies while promoting efficient use of funds.

Our adaptive management proposal is based on the current iteration of a groundwater management approach discussed in the Division 512 Rules Advisory Committee as presented by the water resources department. The community role is envisioned as a means to review both the voluntary groundwater use reduction actions and impact mitigation activities. It is also envisioned that there would be a convening of a community partners group focused on both regulatory implementation and voluntary actions on an annual basis.

If HB 3800 were to pass, High Desert Partnership would be ready to continue to work with our community in this capacity.

Sincerely,

Brenda Smith

Brenda Smith, Ph.D. Director, High Desert Partnership

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