

Testimony re Lottery Bond Project

High Desert Partnership Collaborative Center

I am a retired state employee, having worked for 13 years at the Division (now Department) of State Lands, 3 years as Governor Kitzhaber's Governors Watershed Enhancement Board Program Manager, and 14 year as Deputy Director of the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board. In my time working on natural resource issues across the state of Oregon I have seen areas of intense conflict, unresolved historic issues and a few areas of collaborative problem solving. The High Desert Partnership is a model for the latter approach. Their process and community based approach to addressing complex socio-ecological issues can and should be modeled around the state.

At a time of political division and discord, local communities need to solve problems and the approach the HDP has modeled can be more broadly applied. By having a center where others from around the state can come and explore alternative approaches to solving complex problems involving communities, resources, and complex legal, and social desires the investment in a center has the potential to reduce costs and conflicts over time across the state.

Why in Harney County you might ask? There are many reasons, first the model developed there some two decades ago, second it is important for people to see and experience a community where collaboration is modeled, and third, Harney County needs an economic investment from the state following significant losses from groundwater uncertainty and recent flooding.

Lottery Bonds are dedicated to:

- Create jobs;
- Further economic development;
- Financing public education in Oregon; or
- Restoring and protecting Oregon's parks, beaches, watersheds and native fish and wildlife.

The High Desert Partnership has a track record of protecting wetlands and wildlife in the Malheur Wildlife Refuge and adjacent private ranches through the collaborative development of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Harney Basin Wetlands Collaborative, they have a record of enhanced forest management with no lawsuits for 20 years through the Harney County Forest Restoration Collaborative, Coordination of various wildfire organizations is conducted through the Harney County Wildfire Collaborative, they have a small staff that is significant for

employment in the county, they have a Youth Changing The Community Collaborative that uses community members to give students information and experiences with the resources of the area with the goal to improve career opportunities. As a regional partnership that values STEM learning, the collaborative prepares youth for successful careers in STEM fields and builds pathways and pipelines to meet workforce needs.

The continuation of these efforts and the opportunity that a collaborative center to provide outreach and training to others in the state meets the dedicated purposes of the Oregon Lottery Bonds.

The request for \$2 million in lottery bond funds is relatively minor in the larger scheme of requests but will have a significant return to the people of Oregon in terms of reduced social friction, youth engagement, and enhanced natural resource management.

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