



HARNEY COUNTY COURT

Office of Commissioner Mark Owens

450 North Buena Vista #5, Burns, Oregon 97720

Phone: 541-573-6356 Fax: 541-573-8387

E-mail: mark.owens@co.harney.or.us

Websites: www.co.harney.or.us ♦ www.harneycounty.org

April 11, 2017

Testimony in Support of the Oregon Water Resources Department Budget

Joint Committee on Ways and Means Sub-Committee on Natural Resources
Submitted by: Mark Owens, Harney County Commissioner

Senator Frederick, Representative Witt, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of the Oregon Water Resources Department (OWRD) budget.

Water is the conversation of the day and into the future. The ability of the OWRD to manage the public's resource of water is dependent on support of the proposed budget. There is a lot going on with water in Harney County. To give you a little background, in May of 2015 the OWRD came into Harney County and said they would no longer process any new water permit applications. The current state of knowledge indicates that all, or part, of our basin might be over-allocated. The State has teamed up with the USGS to do a cooperative water-resource investigation. This study has two phases and will not be finished until 2022. The continued support of the OWRD budget is critical to our community to allow this study to be completed. There is a definite need to finish this study so we will know what our limited water resource is. Without this knowledge, we will not be able to complete the planning process that we have started. The planning process that I am referring to is Place Based Planning. We started this process with a grant from the OWRD. The vision for our planning effort is: "A sustainable managed supply of quality water for people, the economy, and the environment." With this vision, you can understand why it is important for our community to have the water-resource investigation completed.

I am in support of the entire OWRD budget, but there is one area I would like to focus on today. This focus is on helping to meet the current and future water needs: Package 104 Helping Communities Plan for Water Needs, Package 109 Feasibility Grants for Potential Water Projects, and Package 110 Grants and Loans to Implement Projects. These packages show that the OWRD has a vision for the future and that the State is going to make an investment into securing this future. Harney County's economy is natural resource based. One of the greatest ways the State can help our frontier economy is by allowing us access to the tools that our community needs for water planning. Our county of 7200 residents would not be able to have the capacity to fund

feasibilities studies let alone projects that will be identified through Place Based Planning. Without access to these tools for water planning we will not be able to meet our Place Based Planning water vision. Our vision, once achieved, will allow us further economic certainty. Without a sustainable water future, there is no economic future for our county.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Mark Owens', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Mark Owens
Harney County Commissioner