



HARNEY COUNTY COURT

Office of Judge Pete Runnels

450 North Buena Vista #5, Burns, Oregon 97720

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

E-mail: pete.runnels@co.harney.or.us

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

April 13, 2017

Joint Committee of Ways and Means Sub-Committee on Education
Salem, Oregon

Senator Rod Monroe, Co-Chair
Representative Barbara Smith Warner, Co-Chair
Members of the Committee

As current and former members of the Harney County Court, we are writing to express our support for two important public service programs at Portland State University: 1) Oregon Consensus, a program of the state's dispute resolution service, and 2) Oregon Solutions. These programs have helped address complicated and potentially contentious issues facing our community and leveraged the resources and support of diverse parties. The foundation of these collaborative efforts also helped our community build resilience that was especially important in the challenges we faced over the last year during the refugee occupation and its aftermath.

The Oregon Consensus and Oregon Solutions teams have been instrumental in helping Harney County build successful collaborative processes to address numerous topics. Specifically, they have provided leadership in:

- Facilitation of the *Harney County Youth Initiative* focused on enhancing the lives and educational opportunities of youth in our community.
- *Sage Grouse related activities* including the development of the State Action Plan that avoided the ESA listing of the Greater Sage Grouse and development of the Candidate Conservation Agreements with Assurances.
- Facilitation of the *Harney Basin Placed-based Water Collaborative* that is working to collaboratively address surface and ground water challenges in the county.
- Facilitation of the *Malheur National Wildlife Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plan* and ongoing implementation of the plan with a diverse group of stakeholders.
- Facilitation of the *Harney Basin Wetlands Initiative*, which was designated by the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board as a Focus Investment Area and is focused on preserving traditional agricultural practices and restoration of important wetlands in the basin.

- Convening the *Harney County Restoration Collaborative*, a forest collaborative focused on developing mutually acceptable solutions to forest management.

Without hesitation, we can say that Oregon Consensus and Oregon Solutions have been extremely effective in addressing the needs of our community. We are thankful the legislature recognizes the significance of these programs, and hope they will continue to be supported.

Sincerely,



Pete Runnels, County Judge



Mark Owens, County Commissioner



Steve Grasty, Former County Judge



Dan Nichols, Former County Commissioner