

March 5, 2019

**TO:** Senator Kathleen Taylor, Co-Chair, Joint Committee on Ways and Means  
Subcommittee on Natural Resources

Representative Jeff Reardon, Co-Chair, Joint Committee on Ways and Means  
Subcommittee on Natural Resources

**SUBJECT: Support for Oregon Water Resources Department POP 101**

Dear Co-Chair Taylor and Co-Chair Reardon and members of the committee:

The following organizations are writing to express our strong support for Oregon Water Resources Department Policy Option Package 101 to support Place-Based Planning in the Harney-Malheur Lake, Lower John Day, Mid-Coast and the Upper Grande Ronde Basins. A total of \$980,000 in General Fund resources will support the current place-based groups, completion of water resource prioritization and implementation plan development, and conduct an evaluation of the place-based approach to water planning for future revision and consideration.

Comprehensive water planning is necessary to respond to increasing scarcity and meet the instream and out-of-stream water needs for Oregon's communities, environment, and economy. In 2015, the Oregon Legislature authorized the Oregon Water Resources Department to pilot a place-based approach to integrated water resources planning. **This approach provides an opportunity for communities to work collaboratively, in partnership with the state, to understand their water resources challenges and needs, and identify potential solutions to meet those needs, while reducing litigation and conflict.**

Support from the Water Resources Department has enabled four place-based coalitions to build community-based collaboratives with diverse stakeholder groups, create governance structures to ensure a durable process, create outreach and work plans, develop water supply assessments for each region, and begin work to complete water supply and demand analyses. **Collectively, the place-based planning groups have matched \$1,000,000 worth of funding to date to leverage and build upon the state's foundational investment.**

While significant progress has been made in the past three years, additional time and resources are needed to complete the final phases of these place-based frameworks. As explained in recent Senate and House testimony, these processes take significant time to build consensus and there is complexity in developing plans. Our groups remain committed to the process and building on the foundation of trust that has been established. Continued financial support for the program will allow collaborative groups to work with the public and technical experts to identify and prioritize solutions to meet water needs and finalize plans to begin implementation of comprehensive water resource visions.

As state leadership now seeks to chart a course to secure a resilient water future for all Oregonians, these place-based efforts can serve as some of the earliest opportunities for investment to achieve a more resilient and reliable water supply for Oregon. The trust and long-

term relationships developed in these groups will provide a critical foundation for successful implementation of future water resources projects. There is a more urgent need than ever to fulfill our water resource planning obligations, and our groups stand ready to work in partnership with state leaders to accomplish these ambitious goals.

Thank you for your consideration and support to fund this critical work.

Respectfully,

Mark Owens, Harney County Court

**Co-convener Harney – Malheur Lake Basin Work Group**

Brenda Smith, Harney County Watershed Council

**Co-convener Harney – Malheur Lake Basin Work Group**

Rianne BeCraft, Harney County Watershed Council

**Harney – Malheur Lake Basin Work Group**

Scott Hartell, Union County Planning Director

**Co-convener Upper Grande Ronde Sub-Basin Work Group**

Donna Beverage, Union County Commission Chair

**Co-convener Upper Grande Ronde Sub-Basin Work Group**

Herb Winters, Gilliam County SWCD

**Co-convener Lower John Day Sub-Basin Work Group**

Debra Bunch, Mid John Day/Bridge Creek Watershed Council

**Co-convener Lower John Day Sub-Basin Work Group**

Tim Gross, City of Newport Public Works Director

**Co-convener Mid-Coast Region Work Group**

Alan Fujishin, Gibson Farms, Siletz

**Co-convener Mid-Coast Region Work Group**