



February 22, 2023

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

RE: Please Support HB 3222

Dear Chair Helm and Members of the Committee,

We urge the committee to move forward HB 3222 which supports collaborative efforts to protect and restore the Harney Basin wetlands—one of Oregon's most vital and iconic wetlands complexes. This is a win-win that benefits ranching communities through irrigation infrastructure improvements while also benefiting birds and other wildlife, as well as supporting the wildlife tourism economy.

This landscape has been challenged by habitat degradation due to invasive carp and conversion of private agricultural lands from traditional flood irrigation to pivots.

Today Malheur Lake, which once produced as many as 180,000 waterfowl annually, produces less than 10,000. Loss of this wetland habitat is catastrophic for wild birds on the Pacific Flyway and severely limits economic and recreational opportunities in southeast Oregon.

In recent years the Harney Basin Wetland Collaborative—a unique group composed of ranchers, conservation groups, agencies, local communities and the Burns-Paiute Tribe—has formed to begin restoring wetlands to their former splendor and ecosystem functionality. This group has been recognized as one of the most innovative collaborations in the western U.S.

Portland Audubon has been invested in this landscape since 1908, when we led efforts to establish the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge. More recently, we have taken an active role in the Harney Basin Wetland Collaborative.

Please support HB 3222 to continue Oregon's legacy of supporting our valuable natural treasures and allow this vital restoration work to move forward.

Sincerely,

Joe Liebezeit  
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