



Leader in Wetlands Conservation

February 23, 2023

Ducks Unlimited
Western Regional Office
3074 Gold Canal Drive
Rancho Cordova, CA 95670-6116

RE: House Bill 3222 – Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water House 2023 Regular Session – Oregon Legislative Information System (oregonlegislature.gov)

Chair Helm,

This letter serves to demonstrate Ducks Unlimited's (DU) support for House Bill 3222. Ducks Unlimited is the world's leading wetland and waterfowl conservation organization where we have been making conservation investments into the Harney Basin for the last 25 years. The Harney Basin is situated within the Southern Oregon – Northeast California (SONEC) conservation landscape. The uniqueness of these closed basins and the legacy of its agricultural roots has established this landscape as one of the most vital resources for continental populations of migrating waterfowl and waterbirds.

Over the last ten years, DU has contributed more than \$600,000 in labor and applied nearly \$200,000 in major gifts directly to the conservation of water and wetlands in the Harney Basin. In conjunction with those investments, DU has delivered nearly 6,500 acres of wetland-based conservation projects situated on and benefitting agricultural lands. DU was central in the development of the Harney Basin Wetland Collaborative (HBWC) and have been active members since its inception. In that capacity, we contributed to the development of the successful \$6 million OWEB FIP grant. We then utilized those state funds to co-author a successful federal NRCS RCPP grant, and most recently were awarded a federal NAWCA grant collectively totaling nearly \$6 million.

We have been active participants in the Harney Basin Place Based Water Planning, recognizing the complementary water use and values between agricultural land and wetland habitat resources. As that process is moving forward, stakeholders are beginning to explore surface water strategies and the incorporation of a decade of collaborative work in the HBWC. In order to sustain our momentum across ever widening and increasingly urgent water resource issues, it is imperative that we maintain the financial support of the state, and in turn continue to leverage that for federal resources.

Few landscapes in the West boast the pre-existing collaborative structure for addressing water resources across a spectrum of stakeholder values. The Harney Basin is poised to employ financial resources directly to measurable outcomes and failure to act could result in considerable ecological and socioeconomic collapse for the basin. For these reasons, DU pledges our support for House Bill 3222.

Respectfully submitted,

Chris Colson
Regional Biologist

