

Submitter: Chad Karges

On Behalf
Of:

Committee: House Committee On Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and
Water

Measure: HB3222

Chad Karges Testimony for HB 3222

Chairman Helm, Vice Chairs Hartman and Owens, and members of the committee my name is Chad Karges and I am a Board member of the High Desert Partnership located Hines Oregon.

Since 1999 I have been engaged in creating collaborative forums including the creation of the High Desert Partnership which supports the Harney Basin Wetlands Collaborative.

For over a decade the Harney Basin Wetlands Collaborative has been working together to restore Malheur Lake and enhance flood irrigation practices on private lands benefiting both agricultural producers and wildlife. Others have or will testify to the accomplishments and the importance of continuing this progress. I would instead like to focus on the foundational components for this effort.

The first component is water. In the desert environment of the Harney Basin water plays a heightened role of importance to both people and wildlife. Most of water in the Basin is derived from snowpack. When the snowpack melts the majority of the time there is either too much or not enough water in the system. This dynamic makes it critical that water be managed efficiently in low flow and flood events.

The second and most important component is diverse interests working together to address water issues. Water issues are often resolved through litigation at high economic and social costs. Court derived solutions also limit the flexibility needed to effectively manage water in a dynamic system. The Harney Basin Wetlands Collaborative has been able to effectively address water issues without litigation. This has enabled the time and money associated with litigation to be redirected to on the ground solutions. This effort has also enhanced the social capital necessary to address the ever evolving challenges of managing water to benefit both communities and wildlife.

In summary House Bill 3222 would sustain and build upon a record of established success that benefits agricultural producers, wildlife, and communities.