



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

RE: Audubon Society of Portland Support for HB 3099

March 7, 2023

Dear Chair Helm and Members of the Committee:

Portland Audubon has advocated for Oregon's wildlife and wild places for more than 100 years. Our mission is to inspire all people to love and protect birds, wildlife, and the natural environment upon which life depends.

In 1908 we were instrumental in designating the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge. We have remained engaged in wildlife and conservation activities in the region ever since, and still maintain field staff in Harney County.

We stand in strong support of HB 3099 with the -1 Amendment.

Twice each year—Spring and Fall—millions of birds stop in Southeast Oregon to rest during their migration along what is called the Pacific Flyway. An estimated 70 percent of migrating birds—including over 6 million waterbirds—annually pass through the Southern Oregon Northeast California (SONEC) region. This includes the Chewaucan River watershed and its terminus in highly saline Lake Abert.

Fed by snowmelt, ranchers' traditional practice of Spring flood-irrigating hay meadows in the Chewaucan basin creates excellent habitat for passing waterfowl, while the abundant brine shrimp in Lake Abert attract many species of shorebird, including rare inland populations of threatened Snowy Plover. But this area is already semi-arid and likely to experience additional water challenges in coming decades.

Rep. Owens and his staff have done great work convening a balanced, inclusive, multi-stakeholder collaborative process to begin addressing conservation and management questions in the basin. **The ongoing collaborative process funded by HB 3099 will focus on illuminating a shared understanding of water management in the region and identifying ways to best meet the needs of agriculture, wildlife, and Lake Abert.**

Additional technical capacity is needed to support a robust understanding of the ecology, hydrology and various water needs in the region. We believe that investment in a collaborative process and technical support will help develop practical, science-based solutions to water challenges facing Lake Abert, the Chewaucan River watershed and the wildlife and communities that depend on this important landscape.

We respectfully urge your support for HB 3099 with the -1 Amendment.

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