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The Harney Basin has a trust issue because we trusted the state and the state misled us for 10 years. Now they want us to get over it and pretend it didn't happen. We are farmers in the Harney Basin. Agriculture is the backbone of our community and economy. We are multi-generational family farmers who care about our neighbors our precious land and water resources. We do not farm to get rich. We farm because we love where we live and we believe in what we do. Despite what you read, irrigators are not pumping more groundwater than is coming back into the system and much less than 10% of our basin is experiencing conditions that could be considered a "crisis."

Working people in our community volunteered thousands of unpaid hours to participate in state supported processes, including a 6-year process to build trust in the groundwater science and a 10-year process to develop a collaborative, integrated plan for water. Many of us were personally involved in both processes. Local, state, and federal governments probably spent over a million dollars on this plan. They told us it would matter. For a decade the Water Resources Department promised partnership and collaboration. They promised our community that we would have a voice in our water future. They told us that they would focus regulation in the areas where there have been known problems for decades and work with us on voluntary approaches where, according to them, there weren't problems.

All that changed when Governor Kotek appointed Ivan Gall as the new director of the Department. For the first year of the process to develop groundwater policies in our basin the Department repeatedly promised that they would foster collaboration and consensus. Ivan Gall sat in front of the Oregon State Senate when he was being confirmed and told them - "We will need collaboration, common sense and compromise for us to succeed." Ironically, one of Ivan Gall's **very first acts** as the new Director was to send someone to the basin to tell us it had been a "mistake" to say that they intended to collaborate with the community. We had been on the long-path of trust and collaboration. One year into the process Director Gall changed direction and chose control.

At the beginning of the process Director Gall told us that they had not decided the extent of the area that would be regulated and that we would have a say before it was finalized. We tried to "have a say." The Department ignored us. We asked Director Gall to have a say in how they were defining management areas. The Department told us that the decision had been made by the science and scientists and shutdown conversation. Director Gall told us that we would have a say in the groundwater level goals in our basin. We tried to "have a say." The Department ignored us. Director Gall told us that there weren't problems in our parts of the basin and we would not come under regulation. The Department changed their

minds without informing or involving us. Director Gall told us they would work with us to look at different model runs and scenarios. The Department got impatient and decided to do it without us. Director Gall promised transparency. The Department held private meetings in the last few months of the process with a Portland based advocacy group to decide the fate of our basin. The Department and the advocacy group had access to the scientific model that they used to decide our fate. Our community did not.

The Department casually told decision-makers that the thousands of pages of public comments were a “50/50 split” – those in support and those against. This was not a true statement. The public comments clearly show that a *significant* majority of our community opposes the policies for very good reasons *using the Department’s own data*. A significant majority of our community, including ALL local governments, the Burns Paiute Tribe, our elected officials, small businesses, and residents rallied together to bring forward a collaborative solution that would minimize conflict and litigation and lead to sustainable use of groundwater. The Department cherry picked parts of it they supported and ignored the rest.

The Department and the media makes it sound like we don’t care about our own community, that we’re just opposed to regulation, and that the state has to save us from ourselves. They make it sound like we just want to suck the groundwater dry and leave. We support reasonable levels of regulation and are committed to managing groundwater so it lasts forever and sustains many generations to come – that’s what our state supported plan says. The Department’s own data and model show that’s what would happen even without regulation in most of the basin.

The Department is hoping to quietly upend over 100 years of water law and policy in the Harney Basin. They want our community, decision-makers and the public to look the other way. According to Oregon’s law and policy, it is their job to protect our water rights. The state has chosen to abandon their own past practices and current law, they have chosen to ignore our state supported collaborative plan and the voice of our community. Working family farmers and taxpayers will now be asked to foot the legal bill to defend bad water policy that will cut 10% of jobs for hardworking families in our basin.

Yes, the Harney Basin has a trust issue. You cannot demand trust. Trust is broken when the public is misled, when science is only used selectively to support a predetermined outcome, when commitments are not upheld, and when decisions are made behind closed doors. We’ve been committed to collaboration for a decade. We still are. The only thing that’s changed is the direction of the Water Resources Department under this administration. Collaboration requires trust that is earned and maintained through honesty and consistency.