Item H: State Recognition of the Harney CBWP Collaborative Integrated Water Resources Plan

Action Item

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September 12, 2025

Presentation Overview

1) Place-Based Water Planning Overview *(OWRD)*

2) Harney Place Based Water Plan *(Harney CBWP Collaborative)*

3) Alternatives & Director's Recommendation

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Place-Based Water Planning Overview

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Place-Based Water Planning

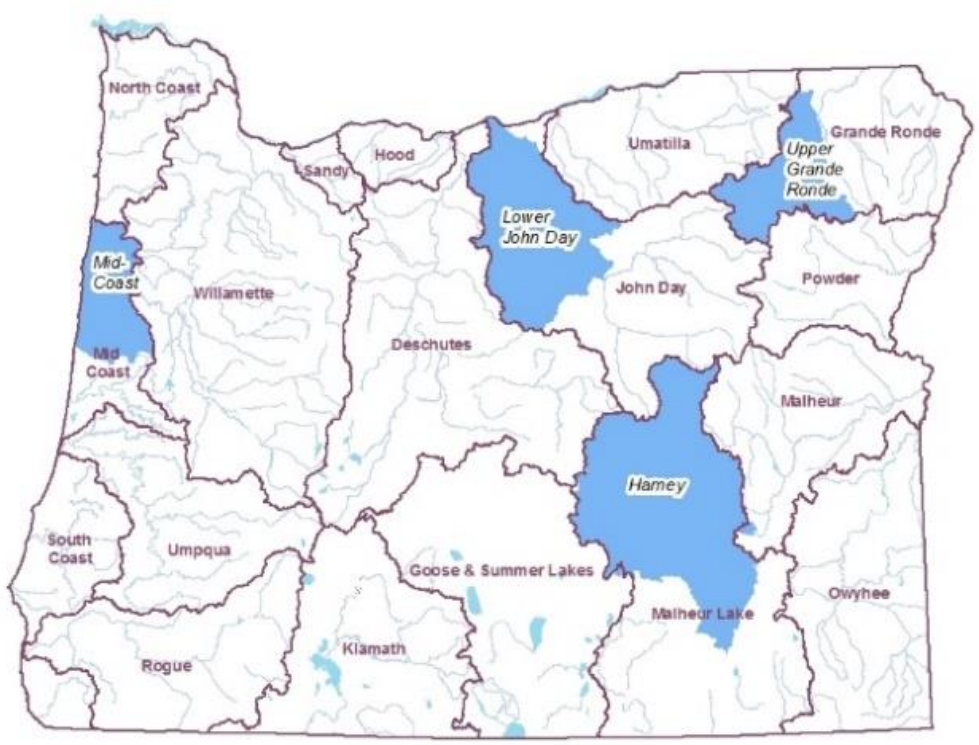
2012/2017: IWRS - Action 9A

2015: Draft Place-Based Water Planning Guidelines & SB 266

2016: First PBP Awards (Pilot)

2023: Plan Review Team & WRC found groundwater portion of the Harney plan was in alignment with the requirements to receive state recognition upon completion of surface water portion of the plan

2025: Plan Review of final draft plan; CBWP adopted final plan



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Harney CBWP Collaborative Place Based Water Plan

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Harney County Integrated Water Resources Plan

Community-Based Water Planning Collaborative

September 12, 2025

Objectives

Showcase the Collaborative's process

Describe who participated, how trust and transparency were built, and the role of Working Groups

Share outcomes of the Integrated Plan

Summarize the Plan's conclusions, including key groundwater and surface water strategies developed by the Collaborative

Highlight strategies already in action

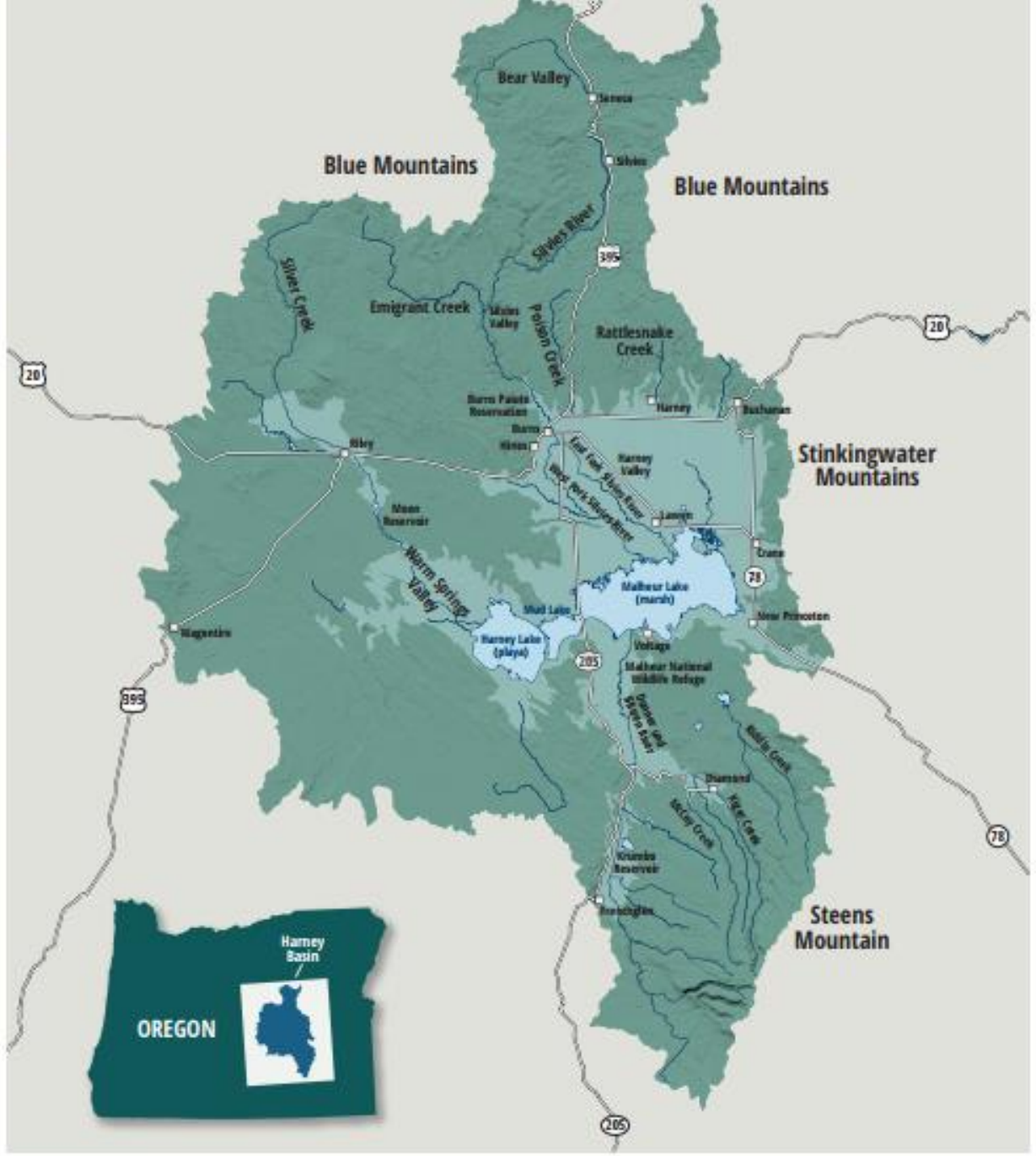
Emphasize implemented and ongoing projects to demonstrate early success

Explain next steps for implementation

Present the phased framework for moving from planning to action

Snapshot of the Harney Basin

- 5,240 sq. miles – Oregon's largest closed basin
- Semi-arid climate with <10" precipitation annually
- Agricultural backbone – 150,000 irrigated acres
- Globally important wetlands and wildlife habitat
- Multiple communities rely on one water system



The CBWP Collaborative

Launched in 2016 as a Place-Based Planning pilot: One of OR's first PBP initiatives

160+ participants across 9 years: Diverse representation maintained throughout planning process

Phased planning approach: Groundwater tackled first, then surface water

Convened by Harney County Court and partners: Groundwater phase led by Harney County Court and HDP; Surface Water phase by County Court and Watershed Council

Guided by a Coordinating Committee: This group set agendas and ensured inclusive, transparent processes

Working Groups shaped key strategies: Separate groups tackled groundwater and surface water details, ensuring technical depth and community relevance

Consensus-driven and inclusive: All decisions were made through consensus with broad representation, creating trust and durable solutions.

Stakeholders

Tribal representation: Burns Paiute Tribe and Numu Allottee Association brought cultural knowledge and stewardship perspectives

Agricultural voices: Ranchers, irrigators, Farm Bureau, Cattlewomen/men contributed expertise on production land use, and water needs

Conservation Organizations: Groups like The Nature Conservancy, WaterWatch, and Portland Audubon Society advocated for habitat and ecological health

Local, state, and federal agencies: Involvement from OWRD, ODFW, DEQ, BLM, NRCS, USFWS, and more ensured technical grounding and regulatory integration

Residents and well users: Community members, particularly rural domestic and stock well users provided essential lived experience

Groundwater Working Groups

Agriculture – Focused on irrigation efficiency, crop viability, and the economic impacts of reducing groundwater withdrawals for irrigation

Domestic-Municipal – Addressed concerns of rural domestic well owners and municipalities facing declining water supplies and well failures

Ecological – Studied impacts of declining groundwater on springs, wetlands, and aquifers that support fish, wildlife and GDEs

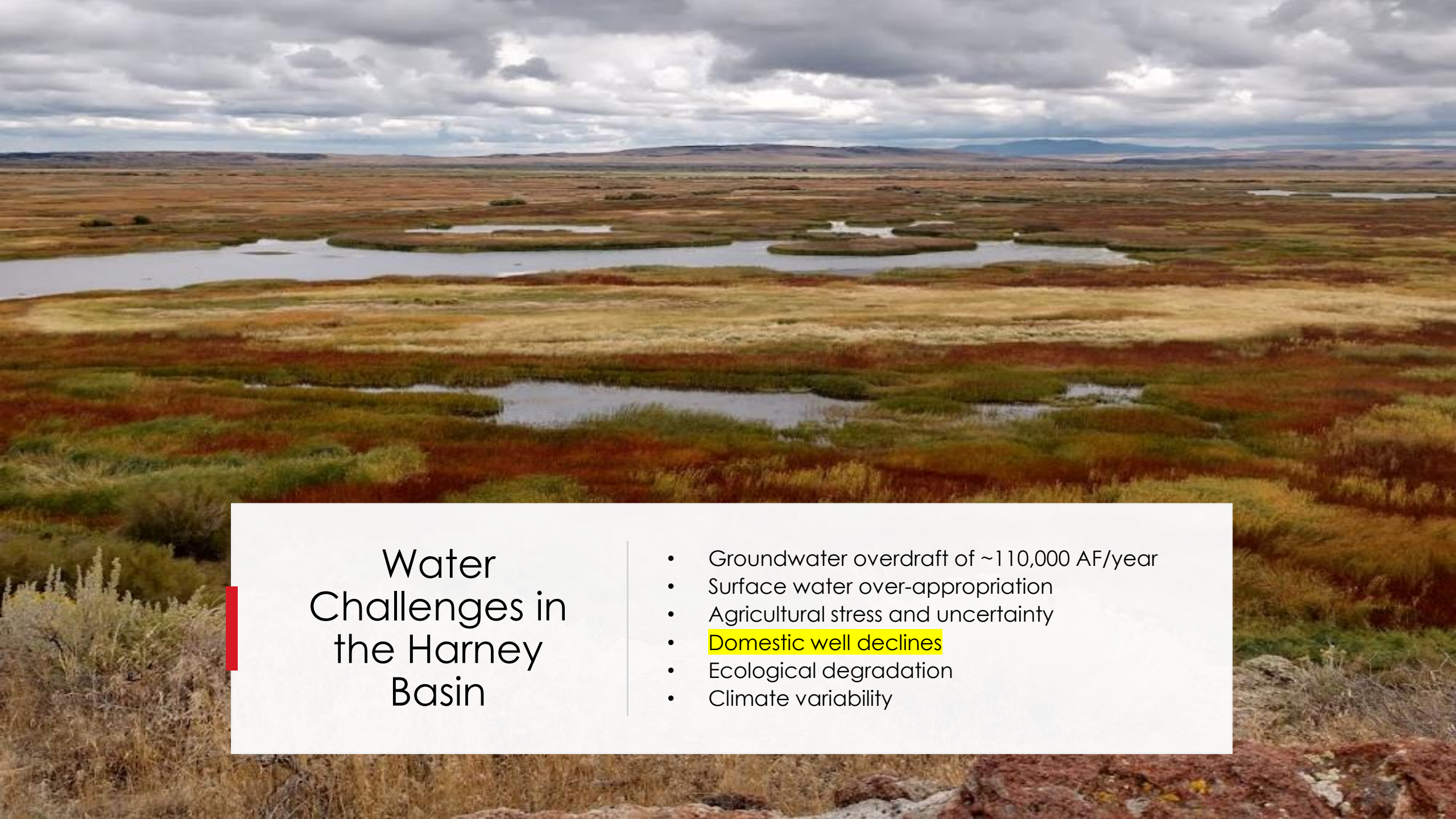
Surface Water Working Groups

Vegetation Management – Focused on improving riparian and upland vegetation

Ecological – Evaluated instream flow needs, aquatic species health, and the protection of migratory bird habitats

Surface Water Management – Analyzed water allocation, infrastructure conditions, and legal constraints such as over-appropriation

Surface Water/Groundwater Interaction – Explored how flood irrigation practices contribute to aquifer recharge and how these systems interconnect



Water Challenges in the Harney Basin

- Groundwater overdraft of ~110,000 AF/year
- Surface water over-appropriation
- Agricultural stress and uncertainty
- Domestic well declines
- Ecological degradation
- Climate variability

Overview of Strategies

Groundwater (31)

- Reducing Agricultural Irrigation
- Addressing Domestic Well Issues
- Conserving Groundwater Dependent Ecosystems
- Measuring and Reporting Groundwater Use
- Improving Accountability
- Collecting and Sharing Information

Surface Water (18)

- Watershed Management
- Conifer and Riparian Conditions
- Historic Overallocation of Surface Water
- Impacts to Instream Uses and Ecology
- Out-of-Stream Uses
- Climate Change Impacts
- Limited Information

Strategies

Reducing Agricultural Irrigation

Voluntary, incentive-based pumping reductions
Irrigation efficiency projects
Crop switching to less water-intensive varieties
CREP enrollments (active)

Addressing Domestic Well Issues

Harney Domestic Well Fund (active)

Conserving Groundwater Dependent Ecosystems

Protecting springs and wetlands tied to aquifer discharge
Meadow restoration and recharge protection
Monitoring

Measuring and Reporting Groundwater Use

Expand metering of high-capacity irrigation wells
Remote sensing to verify use and crop water demand
Annual reporting system tied to adaptive management

Improving Accountability

Clearer compliance with water rights and curtailments
Transparent tracking of reductions under voluntary programs
Public reporting of progress

Collecting and Sharing Information

Data-sharing agreements across agencies and stakeholder groups
Community-friendly communication

Strategies

Watershed Management

Floodplain reconnection and storage enhancement
Beaver reintroduction and natural hydrologic function restoration
Water quality monitoring at watershed scale

Conifer and Riparian Conditions

Upland conifer thinning to reduce evapotranspiration
Riparian planting for shade and bank stabilization
Ongoing riparian studies (active) guiding site priorities

Historic Overallocation of Surface Water

Evaluate water rights portfolio for efficiency and fairness
Infrastructure upgrades to reduce conveyance losses
Voluntary reallocation and instream transfers

Impacts to Instream Uses and Ecology

Instream flow protections for Redband trout and wetland habitats
Habitat enhancement projects (fish passage, side channel reconnection)
Seasonal flow management aligned with ecological needs

Out-of-Stream Uses

Modernization of agricultural diversions and headgates
Better measurement of withdrawals and return flows
Aligning irrigation practices with ecological priorities

Climate Change Impacts

Scenario planning for reduced snowpack and earlier runoff
Promote drought-resilient crops and flexible water allocation
Incorporate climate projections into adaptive management

Limited Information

Expand surface water gages and diversion measurement
Improve data on groundwater–surface water interactions
Share findings in plain language to keep community informed

Implementation Roadmap

27 Near-Term (1-3 years)

- **Domestic well fund**
- **CREP enrollments**
- **Irrigation efficiency upgrades**
- **Riparian condition studies**
- **Streamflow monitoring**

17 Mid-Term (4-10 years)

- Larger restoration projects
- Instream flow protections
- Upland/riparian work
- Irrigation modernization

5 Long-Term (10+ years)

- Climate adaptation
- Economic diversification
- Aquifer recharge efforts

Implementation and Oversight

- Lead: Harney County Watershed Council, Collaborative members
- Support: High Desert Partnership
- Diverse funding sources
- Balanced oversight structure
- Diverse funding sources
- Accountability

Everyone Has a Role

- **Community members:** Encouraged to conserve water, stay informed, and participate in implementation activities
- **Irrigators and landowners:** Central to adopting efficiency practices, enrolling in conservation programs like CREP, and protecting riparian zones
- **Tribal and conservation groups:** Provide essential cultural and ecological knowledge while serving as project partners in restoration and monitoring
- **Agencies and technical partners:** Offer funding, data, and expertise necessary to turn community-led strategies into action.


THANK YOU!
Holly Stanitsas
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Alternatives & Director's Recommendation

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Alternatives

1. Vote to formally recognize the Harney CBWP Collaborative Integrated Water Resources Plan included as Attachment 4 by resolution of the Commission (Attachment 5).
2. Vote not to recognize the Plan.
3. Direct the Department to work with the Harney Community-Based Water Planning Collaborative to incorporate specific changes and return with an updated Integrated Water Resources Plan at a future Commission meeting.

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Director's Recommendation

1. **Vote to formally recognize the Harney CBWP Collaborative Integrated Water Resources Plan included as Attachment 4 by resolution of the Commission (Attachment 5).**
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Thank you!

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