

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

Areas of concern and information related  
to the occupation of Malheur National Wildlife Refuge

### **Long after this group is gone, we will still live here. How will we repair the damage done by this situation?**

Harney County citizens are strong people who know the value of working together. From the beginning, we've come together in many town hall meetings to share our opinions and feelings. We have listened carefully to each other and are working through some tough conversations. We don't have to agree on everything, but we are a community that works out our differences, with effort and civil communication. We'll keep doing that with the goal of mending fences. We will encourage involvement and communication through our community groups, churches, and civic organizations. We can't have healing in our community as long as we're divided.

### **Are the occupiers being helpful, bringing national attention to our local concerns?**

The outsiders who have come into our community, claiming to speak for us, have simply caused division among neighbors. These groups are suggesting we're not capable enough to run our own lives. That is simply untrue. We are intelligent individuals who have tremendous life experience. Although our community maintains concerns about land use in our county and certainly want to see changes, we're capable of pursuing those changes, ourselves. It is offensive for outsiders to suggest they know better than the locals do.

The longer these outsiders are here, the longer we are distracted from continuing our efforts. Their presence is disruptive, requiring us to attend to security concerns and preventing employees from returning to work. Our community is unable to work with federal, state and local officials to achieve change if those partners are not in operation.

### **What's the problem with them being here? Are they hurting anyone?**

Again, since the time that the trespassers of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge have started coming to Harney County, there has been an increase in harassment.

The public is not able to visit the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge and enjoy all that it has to offer as they once were able to. Employees are unable to report to work and unable to live safely in their homes as the group has accessed confidential files.

As others are afraid to travel to Harney County, basketball games have been cancelled or our local team has had to do more travelling to meet the opposing teams elsewhere.

This is not fair to our teams or our community.

### **Who are the people occupying the Refuge? They seem okay.**

We are a nation of laws – city, county, state, and yes, federal. This group circumvents laws and considers tactics, like those used at the refuge, as appropriate ways to express

themselves. Some of the militants occupying the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge have criminal records ranging from reckless driving to aggravated assault. Many involved in the occupation participated in the Nevada Standoff. (<http://www.oregonlive.com/pacific-northwest-news/index.ssf/2016/01/who-are-the-wildlife-refuge-oc.html>)

Since the time that the trespassers of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge have started coming to Harney County, there has been an increase in harassment. Numerous incidents have been reported to the Harney County Sheriff's Office, reports range from local residents being followed around town to suspicious out-of-state vehicles being parked in resident's driveways. (<http://www.oregonlive.com/oregon-standoff/2016/01/residents-near-oregon-occupati.html>)

### **Has the harassment stopped?**

No. We continue to receive reports of harassment. Law enforcement has had multiple contacts with non-Harney County citizens claiming to be in the community as an intermediary between the FBI and the trespassers. Many of these people are armed which can be intimidating. They continue to conduct surveillance on Harney County citizens and law enforcement and have even harassed members of the media.

### **Have locals had a say in managing federal land?**

Collaboration between local ranchers, conservation groups, recreationists, local citizens, and federal, state and local governments is common in Harney County. A great example is the development of Malheur National Wildlife Refuge's Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP), which was completed in 2013. The plan allows for many different types of uses of the land within the boundaries of carefully drafted regulations designed to protect the landscape. There are 13 ranchers with special use permits to use the refuge. The CCP specifies a management direction for the Refuge for the next 15 years under the direction of local people.

Harney County is ground zero for the greater sage grouse conservation effort, and is widely seen as the successful model of public-private collaboration that was adopted across the sage brush ecosystem. More than 150 Harney County landowners reached across the fence and signed letters of intent to enter into Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances (CCAA) to provide habitat protection and enhancement for greater sage grouse. Their efforts (commonly referred to as "The Oregon Way") were modeled across the range, and were critical in the determination to not list the greater sage grouse as endangered. This is the spirit of collaboration that you are witnessing in Harney County.

Here in the Burns area, BLM's successful Five Creeks Rangeland Restoration project covers 75,000 acres of public and private lands, includes five landowners and is based on cooperative efforts to restore rangeland and riparian areas. The Five Creeks project is proof that cooperative efforts can and do work and the project is helping to ensure that rangelands in Burns continue to provide forage for livestock and remain healthy.

**Why is the FBI here? Who is in charge?**

Harney County Sheriff's Office and other local and state law enforcement partners are ensuring public safety outside the refuge, in the community. This includes addressing the well-chronicled harassment and intimidation of residents, federal employees, and law enforcement by outside groups that have been in town since November.

The FBI has jurisdiction over the armed takeover of the public buildings on the refuge, as well as any crimes committed on the property. They continue to work diligently toward a peaceful solution.

Harney County Sheriff's Office has a strong working partnership with the FBI to coordinate efforts. Bringing a peaceful resolution to this situation remains the main objective of law enforcement.

**Why hasn't law enforcement done anything to address those on the refuge?**

The public lands are being administered in accordance with U.S. law. Any changes to these laws would need to be addressed by Congress.

The federal government has nothing to gain by taking precipitous action. Law enforcement partners continue to work for a peaceful and just resolution.

**Has law enforcement done anything about unlawful incidents in our community?**

The sheriff and his law enforcement partners are continuing their pledge of keeping the community safe. Here is a recap of law enforcement encounters over the past few days.

January 14- OSP stopped a vehicle for a lighting violation. The driver, Dwane Kirkland, of Hamilton, Montana, was arrested for felon in possession of a firearm. He was in possession of a handgun and a rifle. The vehicle he was driving had switched plates and was uninsured.

January 15 - OSP arrested Kenneth Medenbach, of LaPine, at the Safeway in Burns. He was arrested on probable cause for unauthorized use of a motor vehicle. OSP recovered two vehicles stolen from the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge during this encounter. Occupants of the second vehicle fled the scene before police arrival. The Sheriff's Office is working to identify and arrest these suspects. If you have any information, please contact the sheriff's office with tips at 541-573-1362.

January 17 - OSP discovered a traffic crash on Greenhouse Lane near Highway 20. Investigation revealed the driver, Darrow Burke, of Ukiah, California, lost control on an icy corner and rolled. He was not injured but cited for no operator's license.

**Will the occupiers be held accountable? Why haven't there been charges against individuals involved in the 2014 Bunkerville, NV, standoff?**

It is a violation of federal law (18 U.S. Code § 372) to prohibit, to conspire, to prevent, by force, intimidation, or threat, any officer of the United States in several specific forms, to

include preventing the discharge any duties thereof or to leave the place where his duties as an officer are required to be performed.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation is actively investigating the occupation of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge, with input and support from the Harney County Sheriff's Office. Harney County feels confident that federal authorities are considering all applicable federal violations.

All entities involved are pursuing a peaceful resolution. Although the occupiers are being asked to leave the refuge and return to their homes, which does not mean that justice will not be served for their actions.

It is worth remembering a standoff in Montana in 1996, which resulted in a peaceful resolution followed by accountability for those responsible for an extended standoff. (<http://www.nbcmontana.com/news/Oregon-standoff-has-precedent-in-Montana/37303252> and <http://www.historyandheadlines.com/montana-freemen-start-81-day-standoff-with-fbi/>)

The 2014 Bunkerville, NV standoff is a separate matter, and will be addressed accordingly.

**Why hasn't county leadership had further conversations with the occupiers?**

Sheriff Dave Ward met with Ammon Bundy, who has proclaimed to be the leader of the occupation, on January 7, 2016 to discuss a peaceful resolution and Sheriff Ward asked Bundy to leave, which he stated he would not do. From that point forward, the occupiers at the refuge have been considered by law enforcement to be armed trespassers who need to vacate.

**Is the Harney County Safety Committee the representative of our community?**

The Harney County Committee of Safety was created by Ammon Bundy at a meeting he held on December 15, 2016. The Committee of Safety was not created by Harney County and has no official role with the County. There was no official vote by the people of Harney County, electing members to the Committee Safety.

Committees of Safety have their roots in pre-Revolutionary America created as shadow governments to take control of the thirteen colonies away from royal officials. It's unclear if the Committee of Safety is trying to supplant the duly elected government of Harney County. The Harney County Committee of Safety website states, "The Committee of Safety is the governing body for the Militia and directs the Militia in its defensive actions." Harney County wants the militia gone, not "governed." If the Harney County Committee of Safety controls the militia, please send them home.