

Statement of
Tim Blount
Executive Director
Friends of Malheur National Wildlife Refuge
Before the United States House of Representatives Committees on Natural
Resources and Homeland Security
Minority Forum: Countering Extremism on America's Public Lands
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My Name is Tim Blount and I am the executive director of the Friends of Malheur National Wildlife Refuge, an organization of nearly 2000 members. I both work and live on Malheur National Wildlife Refuge. During the occupation my life was directly impacted with me being forced to leave my home under threat to my safety. All refuge staff were forced to leave the area with hardship to their families because of threats and harassment from militia members. My community suffered as well through the influx of undesirable militia and their harassment of other federal employees and the necessary concentration of law enforcement that the situation dictated.

Throughout the occupation I became keenly aware of my surroundings and never felt safe. I found that my trust level was severely diminished. Refuge staff and I had been told that they were looking for one of us to kidnap. That they had personal information on many of us was disconcerting and furthered the feeling of not being safe. I had to pass through Burns at one point during the occupation and was required to have a law enforcement escort before doing so. I now find myself looking over my shoulder, not feeling comfortable and realizing that I am a victim of domestic terrorism. I love my community but now I wonder who supported the militia and in doing so supported how I and refuge staff were victimized.

Malheur has worked hard at building the collaborative effort in Harney County. With efforts of neighboring ranchers, federal, state and county agencies and concerned citizens, strong partnerships have been formed to find solutions that will benefit both the environment and those that rely on public and private land. This has been a long road of hard work and the value that is felt by all involved in the collaborative process is immense. This created a strength with Malheur's neighbors and many stood steadfast against the occupiers. A perfect example is Ammon Bundy's cutting the boundary fence that separated the refuge from a nearby rancher. A big show was made of Bundy opening up the refuge for this rancher. The next day this very irritated rancher mended his fence. During the occupation emotions ran over when Georgia Marshall, wife of Gary Marshall and area ranchers who helped found the High Desert Partnership spoke at a town hall meeting.

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Harney County citizens were recently able to make their dissatisfaction heard during the May 17th Primary. In local races for Harney County Judge and Harney County Commissioner, candidates supporting the militia and constitutionalist were met by a 72 percent voter turnout and resounding defeats.

Thank you.