

Shocking Trial Verdict!

Gary Ivey, President



Like most of you, we are deeply shocked at the verdict from the trial of the Malheur Refuge occupiers. All 7 were found "not guilty" of all charges. This is an example of injustice to the extreme! The verdict raises concerns about Malheur Refuge and other public lands and the ability of federal employees to safely do their jobs and to provide habitat for fish and wildlife. Several of the Malheur staff have transferred, and the remaining staff might not be safe in the future from these domestic terrorists. We are concerned about the reduced level of staffing and their ability to meet the refuge purpose, as identified by President Teddy Roosevelt in 1908, "as a preserve and breeding ground for native birds." The trial outcome may encourage other illegal acts against public lands and further threaten wildlife and our natural heritage on these lands that are owned by all Americans. We need to step up and demonstrate wide public support for our public lands and agencies who manage them.

Those occupiers illegally took possession of your public property and prevented your government employees from managing your fish and wildlife resources. They caused major damage to the facilities at the refuge; illegally used government equipment, computers, and supplies; stole refuge gas, private items from employee's offices, and also much of this Friends Group's inventory and cash from our Nature Store at headquarters. Even worse, their actions and harassment caused extreme emotional stress to refuge employees, to other government employees throughout Harney County, to citizens in the local community, and to all of us who love wild places that our public lands provide. It isn't fair, and justice surely has not been served.

Although we want to see justice served NOW, we need to be patient as law enforcement continues to seek justice against those involved. However, we can't just wait and do nothing. To help move beyond all this, early in 2017 we plan to begin a campaign to get people to pledge to visit Malheur and show support for the refuge staff and the National Wildlife Refuge System, and to show support for the local community by spending money locally in stores, and on lodging, restaurants and gas. We must continue to advocate vigorously for continued recognition of the environmental and spiritual value of the nation's public lands, lands that belong to all of us. We must speak out and communicate to our elected leaders and representatives at all levels of government that America's public lands are an essential element of our national heritage, one that we are duty bound to pass on to our children and future generations. Please join with us in this critical effort.