



THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR

WASHINGTON  
OCT 28 2016

**Memorandum**

To: All Department of the Interior Employees

From: Secretary Jewell *Sally Jewell*

Subject: Verdict in Malheur National Wildlife Refuge Armed Occupation

As you know, a Federal jury last evening delivered its verdicts following the trial concerning the 41-day armed occupation of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in Oregon. While we must respect the jury's decision because we believe in the rule of law and our system of justice, I am profoundly disappointed in this outcome and am concerned about its potential implications for our employees and for the effective management of public lands.

Deputy Secretary Mike Connor and I visited Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in March to meet with employees impacted by the occupation. It was painful to hear from employees who had devoted entire careers to public service and were worried about their safety as they carried out their important missions on behalf of the American people. It was disheartening to walk room to room and survey the damage and destruction caused by occupiers to the natural, cultural, and tribal resources.

And yet, I left Malheur inspired by the incredible collaboration and partnerships that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Bureau of Land Management had formed with the residents of Harney County long before the occupiers traveled to Oregon. These relationships will endure long after the jury's verdict. The strong foundation created by relationships, such as the High Desert Partnership, helped the community begin the healing process from this terrible tragedy and get back to the business of working together for the common good.

As we digest the jury's verdict, our foremost priority continues to be the safety, security, and well-being of people who comprise the Federal family and those visiting America's public lands. I am absolutely committed to maintaining a safe work environment that allows employees to uphold the laws of the United States and carry out our mission of responsible public land and water stewardship for the benefit of all Americans. That will never change.

I want to again express my sincere thanks to the Federal, State, and local law enforcement authorities who worked around the clock to resolve this situation as quickly and safely as possible, and for the dedicated professionals at the Department of Justice for their efforts in this case. Additionally, I want to thank all of the public servants who work tirelessly to conserve, protect, and promote America's natural and cultural resources. I am proud of you and feel fortunate to call you my colleague.

In the coming days and weeks, I encourage you to take care of yourselves and your fellow employees. The armed occupation in Oregon was and continues to be a reminder that employees in all offices should remain vigilant and report any suspicious activity to your supervisor and, where appropriate, law enforcement officials.

As public servants, we are held to a higher standard in all we do, and I know we can meet this challenge, too. In the face of a difficult situation, we have shown that perseverance and partnership is the best path forward to celebrate and honor our Nation's incredible landscapes – and all of their uses – for generations to come.