



**Testimony in Support of SB 838  
WaterWatch of Oregon  
April 15, 2013**

Founded in 1985, WaterWatch is a non-profit river conservation group dedicated to the protection and restoration of natural flows in Oregon's rivers. WaterWatch works to ensure that enough water is protected in Oregon's rivers to sustain fish, wildlife, recreation and other public uses of Oregon's rivers, lakes and streams. We also work for balanced water laws and policies. WaterWatch has members across Oregon who care deeply about our rivers, their inhabitants and the effects of water laws and policies on these resources.

WaterWatch supports SB 838.

The Oregon Chapter of the American Fisheries Society has studied the published literature on the effects of suction dredge mining and noted the rapid expansion in suction dredge mining on many Oregon rivers and streams. The Society has stated that “[l]ittle is understood regarding the impacts of increased and cumulative actions in Oregon streams.”<sup>1</sup> Similarly, the Society has “encourage[d] that suction dredge mining be prohibited or greatly reduced where sensitive fish stocks utilize reaches for spawning or where other sensitive life history stages are present” and recommended a “precautionary” approach that is based on strengthening management practices around the activity and increasing enforcement.<sup>2</sup>

Accordingly, WaterWatch supports a moratorium on suction dredge mining “in the full length of any river and tributary thereof in this state, of which any portion contains essential indigenous anadromous salmonid habitat, as defined in ORS 196.810, or naturally reproducing populations of bull trout.”<sup>3</sup> The effects of the increased and cumulative impacts of suction dredge mining on salmonids and other aquatic species should be studied, a precautionary approach adopted in the regulation of this activity and improved management practices, permitting and enforcement should be instituted to address the impacts of this activity on Oregon's waterways and aquatic species.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on SB 838.

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<sup>1</sup>

EFFECTS OF SUCTION DREDGE MINING ON OREGON FISHES AND AQUATIC HABITATS  
Oregon Chapter American Fisheries Society, April 2013

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> SB 838, Section 1.