

Testimony for HB 838

Dear Senate Environment and Natural Resources
Committee,

April 14, 2013

I write to you today in support of this bill and the five year moratorium it proposes on suction dredge mining on salmon bearing rivers. I have lived in Southern Oregon over 34 years in areas that seem to be a focal point for folks intent on dredging gold. Unfortunately most often these folks just suck up gravels, sediment, macroinvertebrates and the occasional eggs of fish...and an occasional gold flake. I am an avid kayaker and spend most weekends from March through September getting wet and enjoying the riverine habitat.

The devastation of spawning gravels and sediment plumes I've witnessed in the bedrooms of salmon and steelhead along pristine Oregon waterways is sickening. Perhaps if these "recreational dredgers" played by the rules of when and where they can suck the impact wouldn't be nearly so bad. But the good stuff, the hidden virgin gold in the banks just waiting to be "discovered" is apparently too tempting to resist. I usually only witness the aftermath of this destruction on my river excursions. The banks are undercut, shrubs and trees are falling into the water and fine sediment blankets the once exposed perfect gravels for spawning. The garbage left on the banks is another story as well. It seems there are twice as many dredgers out there that I see in just the last couple years.

There is no enforcement of this illegal bank mining they call dredging and budget cuts assure even less risk of ever getting caught. Please vote yes in support of this suction dredge moratorium to allow our rivers and fish to heal.

Sincerely,

Steve Rouse
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