

To our esteemed Oregon State Senators,

April 17, 2013

I am writing you in regards to SB 838. I support a full moratorium on suction dredge mining in Oregon in order to “take a break” and develop a more conclusive study on the impacts of dredge mining on our rivers, streams and fish. I also support it because it would allow river runners to experience the quiet, clear, safe rivers that we know and love.

I have been a professional river guide in southern Oregon for the last 16 years. I have seen the activity of suction dredge mining on many of southern Oregon and northern California’s rivers over the years. Most of the time it has seemed to be no big deal but there have also been times in which I have had concerning encounters with miners on some of my trips.

A specific encounter occurred on the Illinois river several years ago where a group of us were floating down river quietly enjoying the beauty of the river canyon and readying ourselves for camp when we floated by a dredge and a couple of men on the side of the river. First of all it was a bit shocking to see a dredge stationed in this particular part of the river as it is not a section that is legal for dredging. Second, when we said “hello” they not only did not greet us, but fired off gun shots as we floated by. This not only frightened us but we were unable to hike the next day on the other side of the river because we were fearful for our safety.

This kind of behavior is completely unnecessary and dangerous for people out on the river just trying to enjoy themselves. I have had encounters with miners on the Rogue River as well, yelling at our boats, flipping us off, and generally making myself and my guests feel threatened and unsafe on an otherwise enjoyable river run.

I know that not all of the miners out there behave this way. I have also had positive encounters with a very select few who were courteous, and friendly. But I would have to say that the majority of interactions that I have had with them have been negative and threatening.

I am all for multiple use on our rivers. I do not generally value one person’s activity over another but I do have to question it if it is harmful to our land, our water, our wildlife and us as river users. If suction dredge mining was thoroughly studied for its impacts on fish and river ecosystems and then regulated so that it was handled more responsibly and ethically I wouldn’t have such a problem with it. But how it is being dealt with now is unacceptable and must be changed.

As the river industry has grown, we have made sure to implement the “leave no trace” ethic and usage. We are aware that there are more of us out there so we work hard to stagger our float times so that it is not crowded on the river and at the take out. We are working harder to educate the people we take down the river on the current issues involving our rivers and our water supply. Rafting and fishing bring people to Oregon to work and to play and therefore boosts our local economy each summer season. We are a

sustainable industry that provides jobs and creates small businesses that depend on our rivers. It seems to me that we should be pushing for clear, quiet, scenic rivers and their health. Until suction dredge mining can progress to have less impact on our rivers, fish and rafting and fishing usage it should be put on hold.

I urge you to support SB 838 to place a moratorium on suction dredge mining so that we may come up with a better plan to protect our rivers and fish for the future.

Thank you.

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