

Testimony of Priscilla Weaver, April 15, 2013, before the Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

My name is Priscilla Weaver. I own and live on a farm at 6268 Little Applegate Road, Jacksonville, in Senator Bates' district.

I am a full-time sheep rancher and I am directly affected by both the possible designation of the Little Applegate River as a Scenic Waterway and also by suction dredge mining and here's why.

The continuing availability of good quality river water for our flock of 200 heritage sheep is essential to our business. So is our continuing ability to irrigate the pastures that provide hay for our flock. So is our ability to continue operating our farm as a farm, without the constraints in the Scenic Waterway Act that are not appropriate on a river like the Little Applegate.

Senate Bill 401, as originally proposed, would regulate our entire farm as a "scenic waterway," omitting the statutory analysis that is supposed to happen before a river is designated. If passed, the original bill would deprive us of the opportunity to demonstrate to the Parks Department why our river should not be designated. Therefore, I urge the Committee not to pass SB 401 in its original form. I have set out the details of my opposition to the original bill in my supplemental testimony.

If the amended version of SB 401 becomes law, I look forward to working with the Parks Department in their analysis of the Little Applegate River.

I now turn to the proposed moratorium on suction dredge mining in Senate Bill 838. The rivers in Southern Oregon, and the contribution they make to Oregon's economy, are particularly fragile because of how little rainfall we receive compared to up here. Suction dredge mining should not be allowed in our little river without first determining that it can be done without significant harm to the water quality.

Maintaining the health of the Little Applegate riverbanks and riparian zones to lower temperatures, prevent sediment, and so forth, is hard enough for those of us who farm adjacent to the river, without adding the degradation caused by in-stream mining.

I urge the passage of the moratorium to allow for coordinated and scientifically based regulation of in-stream mining only in those rivers – if any – that can withstand such mining without degrading the river.

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