

Testimony Against SB 401 and SB 838

Madam Chair Dingfelder and members of the committee,

My name is Samuel Seth. I reside in Keizer, OR. I am a college student currently studying for a degree in forestry. Small scale gold mining, including suction dredging, is my main source of income. The gold I mine in Oregon directly supports my college education. SB 401 and SB 838 would destroy my job, render my federal mining claims completely valueless, and certainly put my college education in jeopardy.

This summer I plan on mining full time for approximately three months before the next semester of school starts. Based on extensive experience in the area I will be mining, my partner and myself expect to recover in excess of two ounces of gold per week. A conservative estimate would put my income at \$1,300 per week, or \$15,000+ over the summer for my share after expenses. A full time job I have been offered in Salem would earn me \$4,560 for the summer. That figure does not take in to account any living expenses.

Small scale gold mining in Oregon is a viable source of income. I am not aware of any other full time job that I could get for the summer that would even approach what I'm able to earn mining. This money will directly pay for my college tuition. SB 401 and SB 838 would destroy that.

I care deeply for our environment, and I enjoy spending time hiking, fishing, and engaging in other outdoor recreation. I always ensure that my dredging activities are within regulations which protect fish and other wildlife resources.

In stream mining activities can *never* occur when there are fish eggs or vulnerable young fish in the water. Dredging seasons vary by stream according to what fish species live there.

A common misconception is that gold dredgers actively suck up fish eggs or directly harm vulnerable young fish. This is absolutely not the case. The in-water work periods that are in place in Oregon completely protect fish and their eggs during sensitive time periods. Dredge seasons are typically six weeks to three months long. I can, with utmost certainty, tell you that no fish egg has ever been put through a suction dredge under our current regulations.

The environmental impacts of small scale mining in Oregon are incredibly insignificant. Each year in Essential Salmon Habitat streams a dredger can legally only move 25 cubic yards of material. All streams that anadromous salmonoids spawn in are considered ESH. 25 yards in an entire stream is a miniscule drop in the bucket. Dredge holes are legally required to be filled, and tailings piles must be leveled. Any small remaining disturbances will be erased with the first winter rains and subsequent high water events. In dredging activities, there is never anything

added to the stream. In-stream gravels are simply processed and deposited back in to the water a few feet from where they were taken.

Claims that in stream mining activities under our current regulations are harming fish are absolutely unfounded and absurd. These bills can cite no scientific reason behind banning small scale mining. There are many peer reviewed studies proving that the environmental impacts from small scale mining are either insignificant or completely nonexistent. I can provide copies of these studies related to suction dredging and other small scale mining upon request. If there are any questions regarding claims I have made related to the environmental impacts of suction dredging, please do not hesitate to request a copy of a relevant scientific study.

Small scale mining in Oregon is economically significant today and is an important part of our heritage. Hundreds of Oregonians rely on this type of mining as a main income source, and thousands more travel all around the State engaging in mining as a recreational activity. These bills seek to destroy this industry for selfish reasons with little or no scientific backing. I respectfully urge you to not allow these unjust bills to proceed further.

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