

Testimony of Laurence Tuttle ¹
in Support of HB 2248

Before the
House Committee on Agricultural and Natural Resources

February 28, 2013

The purpose of this testimony is to support HB 2248. HB2248 extends the framework of the 1991 Oregon Chemical Process Mining Law to other mineral mining operations.

Decisions to mine are based on two factors: 1) the quality of the ore body; and, 2) the price of the mineral commodity to be mined. Despite the best exploration techniques, much about an ore deposit remains an unknown until mining begins. Mineral prices -- generally established by international commodity markets -- are always highly volatile.

By contrast, the process for evaluating and permitting mine operations can be and should be predictable. HB 2248 -- and the 1991 General Mining Law which serves as its framework -- provides predictably through coordinated, consolidated multiagency permit evaluation, processing, and issuance. Existing Oregon statutes for non-chemical-extraction mineral mines do not offer an understandable, comprehensible, and predictable process.

Mining companies support the kind of predictability set out by HB 2248. Calico Resources (Calico), for example, has submitted notice to develop and to operate a gold mine in Malheur County. The application is being processed under the Oregon Chemical Process Mining statutes similar to those proposed by HB 2248. A February 2013 Calico presentation posted to its website makes the following statements about the Oregon process: "*Mining permitting regulations: organized, transparent, timeline driven...*" [See attached.]

HB 2248 also emphasizes comprehensive baseline site characterization. Understanding site characteristics and the proposed operation reduces perils for public resources as diverse as water quality and cultural sites, and reduces the risk for costly abandoned mine cleanups

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to recommend passage of HB 2248.

¹ Larry Tuttle was an active member of the working group which crafted the 1991 Oregon Chemical Process Mining Law and administrative rules. He is the director of the Center for Environmental Equity (CEE) which he founded in 1994. CEE monitors and comments on new and existing mining operations and works to cleanup abandoned mineral mines.

Permitting Summary

Oregon Permitting Regulations:

- Similar to other western states' permitting
- Regulations allow use of cyanide
- Mining permitting regulations: organized, transparent, timeline driven
- State permitting deadline: 1 year
 - DOGAMI and accrediting agencies are required to complete the permitting process within one year after accepting all environmental studies included in the permitting work plan.
- Oregon's regulatory process similar to other western States'