

Cascadia Wildlands

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April 16, 2015

Cascadia Wildlands testimony concerning SB 830 Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

Good afternoon Chair Edwards and members of the committee,

My name is Nick Cady. I am the Legal Director of Eugene-based Cascadia Wildlands, a regional non-profit conservation organization representing 12,000 members and supporters. Cascadia Wildlands educates, agitates, and inspires a movement to protect and restore Cascadia's wild ecosystems. We envision vast old-growth forests, rivers full of wild salmon, wolves howling in the backcountry, and vibrant communities sustained by the unique landscapes of the Cascadia bioregion.

Cascadia Wildlands helped advance past mining legislation in Oregon, and we are here today discussing the result of those efforts, SB 830, and proposed improved regulation of on suction-dredge and near stream mining for gold and precious metals. We are endeavoring to place restrictions on these mining activities because of the threats this practice poses to Oregon's rivers, and the scenic, recreational, and ecological benefits of these river systems in our state. The public and our members have spent millions to protect and restore these waterways, and stringent restrictions on mining practices that would undo these efforts are necessary.

First, there needs to be language in the bill restricting the number of permits issued. There has been a major spike in suction dredging activities in our state following the Californian ban, and we see sharp increases when gold prices increase dramatically. Without protections is likely that these activities will continue and increase and impact our waterways. A cap on the number of permits issued is necessary to prevent unsustainable levels of damage to our rivers, and to allow agencies to quantify and predict the impacts these activities will have when analyzing other projects that could impact aquatic resources.

Second, these activities need to be prohibited in sensitive areas, particularly in salmon, bull trout, lamprey, and mollusk habitat. These iconic Oregonian species, and in some cases federally protected species, need protections from mining activities especially given the rising impacts to these species from climate change. Absent prohibitions in these areas, the state is exposing itself to potential liability under federal environmental laws for permitting activities in these areas.

Third, we need to recognize with this legislation that mining activities a few hundred feet from a waterway will impact water quality and quantity and will have impacts to aquatic species within those adjacent streams, and those aquatic species downstream from the activities. It is well recognized in the federal environmental realm that industrial forestry activities this distance from waterways negatively impact these stream systems, and the species therein. In order to avoid potential liability issues, the impacts of so-called upland mining needs to be addressed and mitigated in this legislation and the following rules.

Finally, there needs to be an adequate fee assessed for suction-dredge mining permits. The current price tag of \$25 a year is far cheaper than a fishing license. The state needs to ensure it will be

compensated for the resource impacts and administrative costs of the program. This state does not need another welfare extractive industry that places the burden of administration and the cost of environmental externalities on taxpayers.

Thank you for your time today.

Sincerely,

Nick Cady
Cascadia Wildlands