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To: Members of the Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee

From: Rhett Lawrence, Oregon Chapter Sierra Club

Date: April 16, 2015

RE: Senate Bill 830

Chair Edwards and Members of the Committee: On behalf of the more than 20,000 members and supporters of the Sierra Club in Oregon, I am pleased to provide this brief written testimony in support of Senate Bill 830, especially in conjunction with the -2 amendments from Senator Bates. As an organization with a long history working to protect water and natural resources in Oregon, we support this bill and its efforts to improve the regulation of suction dredge mining in our state. It is vitally important to have strong protections in place to safeguard our rivers and salmon habitat.

It is thus especially important that we place strict limitations on mining where it would undermine Oregon's investment in salmon habitat restoration. Furthermore, we would like to see regulations in place that would prevent mining in the habitats of other sensitive species, including lamprey, bull trout, and mollusks. We believe SB 830 and the -2 amendments do a good job of accomplishing such conservation aims.

Similarly, we support the provisions in the amendment that address mining within 100 yards of waterways. Mining near rivers and streams impacts habitat nearly as much as mining directly in-water. We approve of the amendment's recognition of the upstream impacts of mining in already-impaired watersheds and its establishment of a more site-specific permitting system to analyze and address such issues.

Additionally, we are appreciative of the language in the -2 amendment that places a cap on the number of permits available for suction dredge mining and we believe that 850 is a reasonable number. And we especially pleased to see the provisions in the amendments that allow the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) to collect permit fees "in amounts sufficient to recover the costs of administering the program." The current fees are far too low and it is imperative that DEQ have adequate resources to analyze, issue, and enforce those permits, as well as provide effective monitoring on conditions in the field.

For these reasons, the Oregon Chapter of the Sierra Club supports Senate Bill 830 and the -2 amendments. We believe these efforts to strengthen the regulation of suction dredge mining are quite timely and could go a long way toward the protection of Oregon's waterways. Thank you very much for considering our comments and please do not hesitate to contact me if I can be of further assistance to the Committee.