



April 15, 2015

Senator Chris Edwards
Chair, Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court Street NE, Room 347
Salem, Oregon 97301

Re: SB 830 "Directing the Environmental Quality Commission to adopt by rule consolidated permitting program for motorized in-stream placer mining and motorized upland placer mining"

Dear Chairman Edwards and Committee Members,

On behalf of Hells Canyon Preservation Council (HCPC), I am writing in support of the proposed amendments to SB 830 offered by Senator Bates.

HCPC is a non-profit conservation organization based in La Grande with over 1000 supporters. Our mission is to protect and restore the inspiring wildlands, pure waters, unique habitats and biodiversity of the greater Hells Canyon-Wallowa and Blue Mountain Ecosystems. Our members enjoy fishing, floating, paddling, hiking, camping, hunting, bird watching, study, contemplation, photography and other activities on and around the rivers of the State of Oregon. These activities have been greatly threatened in recent years by the increase in motorized placer mining in Northeast Oregon and across the state.

Motorized placer mining jeopardizes our inland fisheries and their associated \$452 million dollar annual economic contribution to the state's economy. While dredge tailings may be attractive to spawning fish, these areas are unstable and have less fine sediment interspersed with the gravel reducing the success of spawning. Lampreys are particularly sensitive to this disturbance. Motorized placer mining kills fish eggs, fry, and larvae, amphibian eggs, and mollusks. Motorized placer mining also has significant adverse impacts on near stream habitat, bird species that nest in riparian areas, and water quality.

The noise and fumes caused by motorized placer mining makes streams then desirable for boating, bird watching, camping, hiking and other recreational activities creating user conflicts and harming Oregon's recreational economy.

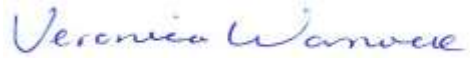
In addition to negatively impacting Oregon's natural resource and recreational economies, currently, the cost of administering the motorized placer mining permit program rests on the shoulders of taxpayers. Due to lack of funds enforcement of permit conditions often go by the wayside.

The proposed amendments would protect salmon, bull trout, lamprey mollusks and other species that thrive in undisturbed gravel substrates of streams; allow for individual permits in areas deserving of special resource protection such as designated biological resource habitat or waters listed as water quality impaired; bring the fee schedule more in line with the actual cost of administering permits; and reduce conflicts between river users.

SB 830, as amended by Senator Bates' proposal, is a fair compromise. It would allow for the continuation of suction dredge mining in Oregon while protecting the most sensitive segments of our streams.

We urge you to support the proposed amendments to SB 830 offered by Senator Bates.

Respectfully,



Veronica Warnock
Conservation Director
Hells Canyon Preservation Council