

Testimony of Charles Gehr before the Oregon Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee in support of Senate Bill 830 relating to mining for precious metals in and near streams

April 16th, 2015

Senator Edwards, members of the Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee:

My name is Charles Gehr and I am a booking agent for fly fishing trips throughout the United States, a fly fishing guide and a resident of southern Oregon. I also volunteer for organizations that seek to protect native fish and clean water in my local watersheds.

I urge the committee to vote in favor of SB 830 with the amendments proposed by Senator Bates.

As an avid angler and river boater ensuring clean water, healthy runs of anadromous fish and quality recreation experiences on our local rivers is of the utmost importance to me.

As a fly fishing guide and booking agent for fly fishing trips throughout the Pacific Northwest I have a vested business interest in clean rivers and healthy populations of fish as well. The outdoor recreation industry is a major economic force in our state, a much greater and more sustainable economic force than a few thousand people dredging our streams. I encourage you to protect industries, like mine, that don't extract natural resources. The measures outlined in SB 830 with Senator Bates amendments squarely address the worst of the impacts to salmon and other sensitive aquatic species and their habitat, provides the state more sufficient resources to better manage the regulator program and houses permitting under a single state agency.

I wish to support capping the total number of permits for suction dredging at 850. On my home river, the Rogue, I witnessed an exponential increase in numbers and density of suction dredges after California instituted their moratorium on the activity.

It is critical to prohibit mining activity in sensitive species habitat and all streams with essential salmon habitat. We have witnessed the steady decline of salmon populations throughout Oregon for far too long. The state of Oregon is investing millions of dollars in restoring salmon habitat, yet currently allowing individuals to damage that habitat with a \$25 mining permit. I pay more for a fishing license where I will end up putting all the wild fish back. We must prohibit mining activity in areas where the state has invested more than \$100,000 to restore salmon habitat.

It seems common sense to me to ensure that permit fees for suction dredging substantially cover the cost of an effective program administered by the DEQ to analyze, issue and enforce these regulations.

We are already aware of suction dredging mining's impact to water quality, which is why there are currently regulations in place pertaining the length of their sediment plumes. I support a prohibition of suction dredging in streams listed as having impaired water quality as well as the riparian areas which are essential to maintaining cool water and filtering runoff.

For all of these reasons I strongly support passing SB 830 with the amendments proposed by Senator Bates.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Charles Gehr