



ORCA: Oregon Coast Alliance  
P.O.Box 857, Astoria OR 97103  
(503) 391-0210      <http://www.oregoncoastalliance.org>

*Protecting the Oregon Coast*

April 15, 2015

Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources  
Oregon State Legislature  
Salem, OR

Re: SB 830

Sent via email: Beth Reiley, [beth.reiley@state.or.us](mailto:beth.reiley@state.or.us)

Dear Chair Edwards and Members of the Committee,

My name is Cameron La Follette, and I am Executive Director of Oregon Coast Alliance (ORCA), a nonprofit Oregon corporation dedicated to protection and restoration of coastal natural resources, and working with residents to maintain livability.

We request the Committee's support for SB 830 with the amendments proposed by Sen. Bates. This is a crucial bill to restore livability and salmon habitat to two major river systems on the south coast, among others in the state: the Rogue and its tributaries, including the Illinois; and the Umpqua.

The essential amendments, which will create a regulatory framework to protect our rivers, include:

1. A cap of 850 permits total (individual and general) per year for suction dredge mining. The Department of Environmental Quality will be the main permitting agency, with the Department of State Lands in an advisory/review capacity. This streamlines the permitting process, making it less confusing for miners, the public and the agencies themselves. It also limits permits to a reasonable number so that river systems and their fragile habitats are not destroyed.
2. Prohibiting mining in sensitive species habitat, including essential salmonid habitat, lamprey, bull trout and mollusk habitat. Rivers and the species that depend on them are essential to riverine health, as well as to the economies of many communities.

3. Granting DEQ authority to set fees for suction dredging that largely or wholly cover the cost of an effective program to analyze, issue and enforce the program, including monitoring and subsequent analysis needs. This lifts the burden from taxpayers and sets it squarely on the shoulders of the miners, whose activities trigger the need for the program. The current fee of \$25 provides for very little agency time, no enforcement, monitoring or comprehensive permit review prior to issuance.
4. Addressing mining in riparian areas that affect aquatic resources. This amendment requires individual permits for water-quality impaired streams for sediment, temperature, toxic metals or other conditions that suction dredging exacerbates, as well as biologically sensitive waters and 100 yards alongside them. These restrictions make sense, given the known sensitivity of riparian areas and their great importance both to rivers and to species that inhabit them, including salmonids, who rely on riparian zones for cool water refugia. Federal agencies already manage riparian areas for greater sensitivity than other surrounding.
5. Limiting mining in areas that would undermine Oregon's investment in salmon habitat restoration.

This last point is a tremendously important one. Oregon has spent millions of taxpayer dollars on salmon habitat restoration over the last decade. So much money has been spent in rural areas of the state that we are seeing the emergence of a restoration economy in rural areas, especially in the coastal zone. For example, according to a 2012 Ecotrust report, the five county area of southwestern Oregon (Coos, Curry, Jackson, Josephine and Douglas Counties) saw investment in 2,350 restoration projects between 200 and 2009, creating and supporting about 1,020 jobs in local communities in desperate need of jobs.

This is a staggering figure, yet it is little realized how important the restoration economy is. Its value stems in part from the fact that the jobs by definition remain local and support local technical and local businesses ranging from hydrologists to gravel companies and native plant nurseries. \$64.3 million spent in the southwest sector in 2000-2009 generated an estimated \$113-\$141 million in economic output. Restoration dollars are local dollars. Furthermore, improvements in habitat function, salmonid habitat and other fish habitat provide both ecosystem services and commercial opportunities to area residents. This kind of success is replicated in many other areas of the state.

All of this investment is severely endangered by the large number of suction dredge miners congregating on the most productive salmon rivers, which also have some of the highest restoration economy investments – including the Rogue, Illinois and Umpqua watersheds. The cumulative impacts of these dredges cause major harm to the rivers.

Please support SB 830, with Senator Bates' amendments for the health of our rivers, communities and salmon habitat restoration investments.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. Please place this testimony into the record for this matter.

Sincerely,

*/s/ Cameron La Follette*

Cameron La Follette  
Executive Dreictor