

To: House Committee on Energy and Environment
Representative Ken Helm, Chair
Representative Mark Johnson, Vice Chair
Representative Karin Power, Vice Chair
Representative Phil Barnhart
Representative Cliff Bentz
Representative Paul Holvey
Representative Pam Marsh
Representative E. Werner Reschke
Representative David Brock Smith

Re: Comment/written testimony urging “yes” vote on Senate Bill 3-A

Date: April 26, 2017

I write as a landowner, small business owner, and rural resident of Jackson County, Oregon, to urge the members of this committee to support passage of Senate Bill 3-A concerning the moratorium on, and regulatory framework for, suction dredge and related types of in-stream mining activities.

As a working farmer dependent on irrigation from the Little Applegate River, I support SB 3-A as a necessary “next step” in assuring a consolidated permitting process that will lead to both efficiency and consistency and also to the kind of well-thought-out permanent permitting standards for the post-moratorium era that will protect our endangered water supplies. It is important that so many different voices, with different agendas and goals, were brought to the table in formulating this legislation and were heard. The compromise bill that is SB 3-A represents the kind of multi-partisan effort that can ensure Oregon’s economic health and also the health of its natural resources.

It also is important that this bill is not a ban on suction dredge mining. To the contrary, it strikes a thoughtful balance between mining interests and the needs – both economic and environmental (in the broadest sense) – of the citizens of Oregon. While I am disappointed that the amended bill does not include all the protections of natural resources found in the original bill, SB 3-A is most assuredly a good step in the right direction for balancing mining

interests against the many other economic and natural resources that are negatively impacted by suction dredge mining.

This compromise bill is especially critical here in southern Oregon, which is much drier than the counties up north and is always at risk of not having enough water. Maintaining the health of both the Little Applegate and other small rivers to prevent damagingly high temperatures, sediment, and overall degradation is essential to the continued growth of the robust agricultural economy in our area. The list in SB 3-A of areas where in-stream mining is inappropriate altogether, while disappointingly narrowed, also is an encouraging step in protecting the water quality and quantity for agricultural uses.

Please send SB 3-A out of committee with a strong recommendation for passage.

Thank you for your time.

Priscilla Weaver
Jacksonville, Oregon