



May 2, 2017

RE: Cascadia Wildlands testimony on SB 3-8; a bill to enact a regulatory framework for suction dredge mining in Oregon

Chair Helm and Committee Members,

For the record my name is Nick Cady. I am the legal director for Cascadia Wildlands. I live in Eugene, where our principal office is located. Cascadia Wildlands is a regional non-profit conservation organization representing 10,000 members and supporters. Cascadia Wildlands educates, agitates, and inspires a movement to protect and restore Cascadia's wild ecosystems. We envision vast old-growth forests, rivers full of wild salmon, wolves howling in the backcountry, and vibrant communities sustained by the unique landscapes of the Cascadia bioregion. Cascadia Wildlands and our members are concerned about the harmful impacts of suction-dredge mining to our state's iconic rivers and aquatic species.

Cascadia Wildlands supports SB 3-8, a bill that enacts a reasonable regulatory regime for suction dredge mining and brings the state into compliance with federal environmental laws. Specifically, SB 3-8 prevents dredging in endangered species habitat, thereby removing the state from potential liability under the federal Endangered Species Act as these mining activities negatively impact the habitat of numerous different threatened and endangered species.

SB 3-8 is the result of a long and collaborative process to still allow suction dredge mining while protecting the most vulnerable and sensitive habitats for threatened and endangered salmon and lamprey. Specifically, SB 3-8 prohibits suction dredge mining in streams that support sensitive salmon and lamprey. This means that streams and rivers that provide critical spawning habitat for threatened species are protected. Outside of these areas, suction dredge mining would be allowed under a Department of Environmental Quality permit that places certain limits on where and how suction dredges can be operated in streams. The bill also amends enforcement procedures for permit violations in response to agency feedback.

This bill is not a ban on suction dredge mining. SB 3-8 represents a measured approach to protecting the most sensitive rivers and streams from the impacts of suction dredge mining. Please support this bill to protect Oregon's rivers and native fish.

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony.

Nick Cady
Cascadia Wildlands