



May 3, 2017

Chair Ken Helm and House Energy and Environment Committee Members  
Oregon State Capitol  
Salem, Oregon 97301

**Re:** Oregon Conservation Network Support of Senate Bill 3-A

Dear Chair Helm and Committee Members:

I am the Director of the Oregon Conservation Network. The Oregon Conservation Network is coordinated through the Oregon League of Conservation Voters and is a coalition of nearly 40 not-for-profit organizations united to advocate for pro-conservation legislation and fighting policies that threaten our state's natural legacy.

This session, we have six legislative priorities, and Senate Bill 3 is one of them.

Oregon Conservation Network groups actively working on this bill include Rogue Riverkeeper, Oregon Council Trout Unlimited, Native Fish Society, Oregon Wild, Oregon Chapter Sierra Club, Center for Biological Diversity, Oregon Coast Alliance, and WaterWatch of Oregon.

In 2013, the late Senator Alan Bates championed a bill that imposed a partial moratorium on suction dredge mining for waters with essential salmonid and bull trout habitat. The moratorium wasn't to take effect until 2016, which was intended to allow time for compromise rulemaking - stakeholder groups met over the course of a year or so and weren't able to reach consensus. So the moratorium is currently in effect - and in areas where the moratorium still allows mining, the state has continued to issue permits. Senate bill 3 is numbered in honor of Sen. Bates' district, Senate District 3, of which Committee Member Marsh's district covers half.

This year, the conservation community, legislators, and the mining lobby have worked hard to reach what we truly believe is a compromise, win-win bill. And, we are pleased that the Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations and the Oregon Chapter of American Fisheries Society also support the bill.

At the beginning of this session, the bill had more restrictive conservation values in place - Most notably, the bill included protecting bull trout and freshwater mollusks. And, the bill also encompassed both riparian and in-stream mining. During the compromise process, we danced around some complicated other ideas that, from a conservation standpoint, both weakened

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and strengthened the bill. On a weakening front, we discussed grandfathering some permit holders in essential salmonid habitat, but ecological concerns - and enforcement concerns - were too great. On a strengthening front, we discussed including non-motorized syphon dredges, but that didn't stick.

Where we landed with Senate Bill 3 A-Engrossed is a straightforward, uncomplicated, compromise bill that we urge you to support.

We no longer have the riparian protections which would have required a complicated and costly inter-agency permitting scheme, and we no longer have bull trout and mollusk protections which would have banned mining in many more river miles. We also no longer have to drag cases through our courts, who are limited in resources.

So, Senate Bill 3 A-Engrossed that is before you today provides immediate, permanent protections against in-stream suction dredge mining in essential salmonid habitat and Pacific lamprey habitat. The penalty for violating the mining ban is a citation issued through the Oregon State Police.

The Oregon Conservation Network urges your support of this bill to protect Oregon's rivers. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Paige Spence

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