



The South Umpqua Rural Community Partnership
A Community Based Not-for-Profit 501(C)3
34620 Tiller Trail Hwy.
Tiller, Oregon 97484

RE: IN SUPPORT OF SENTATE BILL 3

The South Umpqua Rural Community Partnership is a community based non-profit organization based in the South Umpqua Basin of SW Oregon. We serve a large constituency of rural Oregonians in matters ranging from agricultural and social issues to large scale watershed wide terrestrial and aquatic habitat restoration projects.

We have collaboratively partnered with a wide range of stakeholders, including Federal and State agencies, to invest millions of dollars in aquatic habitat restoration projects over the past decade. Our commitment to revitalize rural communities and the environment surrounding them has been unwavering since 2004. We have infused our communities with restoration dollars based on skill sets and resources unique to our area to bring back dwindling fish runs and river health. The greatest challenges facing our efforts are directly related to poor river habitat conditions.

Suction dredge mining in the main stem and tributaries of the South Umpqua river stand to set back years of coordinated efforts to upgrade the poor aquatic condition threatening our clean water supply and invaluable fisheries. Dredging will only exacerbate and already degraded 303d listed river system. The State of Oregon health services has declared various reaches of the South Umpqua as a toxic danger due to blue green algae blooms annually. Dredge mining will only complicate our efforts to lift this onerous declaration from the river byways.

Millions of tax dollars have been invested in restoring stream complexity and aquatic refugia for salmon and other species of concern. Without the constraints of Senate Bill 3 these valuable structures stand to be jeopardized with dredge mining activities. There has already been many documented incidents of hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of damage to large wood and boulder placement structures in the river. Agencies such as the Department of State Lands, the Army Corps of Engineers, NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service invest an incredible amount of time reviewing the restoration plan structures proposed by State, Federal and NGOs engaged in restoration work. These structures are designed with longevity and safety in mind. The river system is lacking in aggregate spawning material these instream structures seek to capture. Dredge miners take advantage of these structures because of their capacity to slow and capture alluvial material. Dismantling these stable structures is a common practice for dredging.

The recent years of low summer river levels can not take the disturbances induced by dredging. There are known abandoned mercury mines throughout the South Umpqua basin. The residues left in the river system are best left undisturbed. The effect of mercury released into the water ways will have an adverse impact on the health of humans and wildlife alike. The South Umpqua river supplies water to many cities and agricultural interests. The costs of human consumption of mercury alone will far exceed and benefit resulting from the extraction of gold from the river.

We having invested considerable resources in promoting tourism to attract out of State dollars to our beautiful wild areas. The noise, turbidity and noxious odors of dredging equipment utilized on the river in the past has engendered complaints and calls for assistance to address the issue to our office from landowners and tourists alike.

The South Umpqua basin is the dwelling place of valuable key species of Spring Chinook. This particular run of King Salmon has been reduced to an average of 120 individuals returning to the

Upper South Umpqua river annually. This particular run of salmon has been designated as a run of concern by the State of Oregon. ODFW has declared all Spring Chinook fishing on the South Umpqua river of limits as a result. Suction dredge mining in the already over-challenged holding pools for these fish has the potential of killing off this rare economically and ecologically significant fish run. Dredge mining organizations had already staked claims to these critical index pools to the detriment of this run. Fortunately they have withdrawn their claims as a result of a little known Federal Forest policy that tenuously protects the refugia. That said, unless Senate Bill 3 is awarded this remnant of Spring Chinook face an ominous future.

As community members our constituents are heartily support the passing of Senate Bill 3 for the good of the community and its desire for self determination. Please take our advisement and leave a legacy of life and help in our endeavors.

Sincerely,



Stanley Petrowski

President/Director

South Umpqua Rural Community Partnership