

Senator Dembrow
Chair, Senate Committee on
Environment and Natural Resources
900 Court St. NW, S-407
Salem, Oregon 97301

Senator Olsen
Vice-Chair, Senate Committee on
Environment and Natural Resources
900 Court St. NE, S-425
Salem, Oregon 97301

February 1, 2017

RE: Robyn Janssen Testimony in Support of SB 3

Dear Chair Dembrow, Vice-Chair Olsen, and members of the Committee:

I am a native southern Oregonian and live in the Rogue Valley. I have spent the last 20 years of my life as a river guide on rivers in southern Oregon, northern California, Idaho and beyond. I now work for a river conservation group and continue to guide part time in the summer. Healthy rivers are my passion, my livelihood and the reason I continue to live and work in southern Oregon.

I am here today representing many of the river guides and outfitters in southern Oregon of which I have talked to and worked for. These small business outfitters depend on clean water rivers, healthy fish populations and the scenic, quiet beauty that the river environment provides. Southern Oregon is blessed with a multitude of wild rivers and world-class fisheries that draw people to the area from all over the world. The Rogue River alone brings people from across the country, and the globe, to raft, fish, and experience all that it has to offer. It sustains numerous outfitters and businesses in both rafting and fishing as well as hundreds of guides and other employees.

However, the rivers and fish that we depend on are being pushed to their limits. We are seeing lower water levels during hot, dry summers, more pollution from cities and agriculture, lower snow packs during our winters and the continued impacts from mining practices like suction dredge mining. I am here today to voice my support for senate bill 3 which would enact a solid regulatory system for suction dredge mining in order to continue to allow the practice while also protecting Oregon's rivers and fish.

As a river guide, it is my job to introduce people to the beauty and adventure of the river. I do my best to educate people about the history and cultures that have utilized the river over the years. Much of the history of southern Oregon rivers involves gold mining. Much of the time I am able to point out present day gold mining practices with the presence of suction dredges on our rivers. However, I am also quick to point out the harmful effects that suction dredges have on our rivers, streams, and fish and my guests invariably experience these effects first hand.

California placed a moratorium on suction dredge mining in 2009. That coupled with high prices of gold brought huge numbers of suction dredge miners to the rivers of southern Oregon. Impacts to the river became more pronounced and turned an otherwise lovely

day on the river into a noisy, polluted, sometime dangerous and mostly unpleasant experience. This is the last thing we want happening in the naturally beautiful areas that entice people to visit Oregon.

I think that most of us know now that suction dredge mining effects fish habitat, specifically sensitive salmon habitat and spawning redds. But what a lot of people don't think about is its effects non-extractive forms of recreation. Rafting and fishing on the Rogue brings in many millions a year in revenue to the local Rogue Valley economy. What I don't understand is how the state and its taxpayers can spend millions of dollars on restoration efforts for salmon and steelhead, like dam removal, while continuing to allow this practice of hobby mining when we know it to be negatively impacting the very things we are trying to restore.

I am not for banning things outright that I don't like or agree with but I am for making sure we are all using our natural resources wisely, equally and fairly. Fishermen pay significant fees which go towards the preservation and enhancement of habitat for fish and wildlife. Rafting outfitters pay commercial outfitting fees and have to follow by specific rules for each river they run. Suction dredge miners should have to do the very same thing, especially considering they are an extractive recreational activity that has negative impacts on the clean water, quiet recreation and healthy fisheries that belong to all of us.

The practice of suction dredge mining should be better regulated, prohibited from sensitive salmon habitat, and allowed in areas where it does not affect these important economic and quality of life resources.

I urge the Senate Environmental and Natural Resources Committee to support Senate Bill 3 - named in honor of the late Senator Doctor Alan Bates - to ensure his legacy and place needed regulations and limitations on suction dredge mining to protect Oregon's waterways now and for the future.

Thank you.
Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Robyn Janssen".

Robyn Janssen
River Guide, Momentum River Expeditions

¹ ECONorthwest, Regional Economic Impacts of Recreation on the Wild and Scenic Rogue River. Ted L. Helvoigt, Ph. D.