



### **Senate Bill 3**

#### **Testimony of WaterWatch of Oregon Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee February 6, 2017**

Founded in 1985, WaterWatch is a non-profit river conservation group dedicated to the protection and restoration of natural flows in Oregon's rivers. We work to ensure that enough water is protected in Oregon's rivers to sustain fish, wildlife, recreation and other public uses of Oregon's rivers, lakes and streams. We also work for balanced water laws and policies. WaterWatch has members across Oregon who care deeply about our rivers and the fish, wildlife and people who depend on them.

#### **WaterWatch of Oregon supports SB 3**

SB 3 represents a multi-year process that brought together diverse interests to develop regulatory reforms intended to protect Oregon's most sensitive habitats for salmon, bull trout and lamprey from the negative effects of suction dredge mining in a manner that allows some suction dredge mining to continue into the future.

Suction dredge mining involves vacuuming up riverbeds through a hose using a motorized floating dredge. This type of mining can smother critical spawning habitat, kill aquatic insects, fish eggs and young fish, degrade stream and riparian habitat, and mobilize legacy mercury.

The current bill is a compromise bill that maintains a short term moratorium on select streams with certain habitat attributes as outlined in the bill, and then sets forth a regulatory framework to craft permanent protections for rivers and fish into the future while at the same time allowing some suction dredge mining to continue. Importantly, this future plan includes what are essentially no touch zones which protect waters within scenic waterways, federal and/or state protected lands (parks, wilderness, areas of critical environmental concerns, tribal lands) and water quality impaired river sections (for sediment, turbidity, toxics or heavy metals associated with sediments). This compromise bill will protect our some of our state's most important fish habitat from the negative effects of suction dredge mining.

WaterWatch urges the Committee to vote in support of SB 3.

Thank you for your consideration.

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