

**Testimony to the House Committee
on Agriculture and Natural Resources on House Bill 2106**

February 20, 2017

**Lori Grant, Water Program Director
Oregon Environmental Council**

Founded in 1968, the Oregon Environmental Council (OEC) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, membership-based organization. We advance innovative, collaborative and equitable solutions to Oregon's environmental challenges for today and future generations.

Oregon Environmental Council opposes the suction dredge mining provisions of HB 2106 as they do not provide adequate protections for Oregon's rivers.

Suction dredge mining has significant unavoidable effects. Those unavoidable effects include:

- Water quality effects from resuspension of mercury and other metals
- Water quality effects from increased turbidity and suspended sediment
- Effects on bird species that nest in riparian areas
- Public exposure to high noise levels
- Effects on historical and archaeological resources

In addition, suction dredge mining directly harms the nests, eggs and young of the endangered salmon species that Oregon is spending millions of dollars to restore. We need to protect those investments and the health of our waterways. Multiple years of discussion and review among representatives from the mining industry, state agencies, recreation, scientists and other stakeholders have resulted in SB 3, which outlines a comprehensive approach to protecting Oregon's rivers and streams from the harmful effects of suction dredge mining. Sections 17 and 18 of HB 2106 pertaining to suction dredge mining are much more narrow in scope and much less protective of rivers, native fish and riparian habitat than SB 3, and should be deleted from the bill.

In general, SB 3 protects a greater range of threatened and endangered species as it applies to more rivers than HB 2106, provides more rigorous permit requirements, extends protections to stream banks and riparian areas, addresses public noise concerns by specifying hours of operation, and simplifies enforcement of violations.

We believe SB 3, under review by the Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee, is the best vehicle to address the full range of impacts of suction dredge mining, and strongly urge deletion of Sections 17 and 18 of HB 2106.