



Dear _____,

On behalf of the Wild Steelhead Coalition's thousands of members who care deeply about Washington's wild steelhead and rivers, we are writing to request that you vote "YES" on SB 5322. This important legislation will take a much-needed and long-overdue step to protect Washington's rivers and our imperiled fish populations from motorized suction dredge mining and other forms of motorized mineral prospecting.

Currently, Washington suffers from a lack of regulations to protect our fish and waters from the ill effects of suction dredge mining. Scientific studies show that this destructive practice has a major negative impact on wild fish by degrading water quality, destroying aquatic habitat, denuding riparian vegetation, and creating fish stranding risks. Despite this well-documented harm, Washington's current regulations allow suction dredge mining in virtually all waterways and Pacific coastal beaches, including those designated as "critical habitat" under the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

Making matters worse, Washington is the only state with populations of ESA-listed Pacific salmon and steelhead that still allows suction dredge mining and other forms of motorized mineral prospecting without requiring permits or regulatory oversight. Consequently, Washington State has become a target for out-of-state miners, creating much greater pressure on our streams and a dangerous situation for our water quality and threatened wild steelhead and salmon populations in areas such as the Yakima Basin, Upper Columbia, and Skagit River.

Recently, federal courts ruled that discharges from motorized mining must comply with the federal Clean Water Act. Oregon, California, and Idaho have all responded to this ruling by enacting programs to comply with the Clean Water Act and protect ESA-listed fish species. However, Washington has not followed suite and is not in compliance with this federal court ruling.

Passing SB 5322 would remedy Washington's current regulatory shortcoming by banning suction dredge mining in ESA-designated "critical habitat" for steelhead, salmon, and bull trout as well as empowering the Washington State Department of Ecology to oversee Clean Water Act compliance for suction dredge mining activities. This commonsense approach will create the necessary safeguards for our wild fish and waters while minimizing the regulatory burden and cost to the state. Moreover, it will protect the hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars spent on fish habitat restoration and protection that is being undermined by suction dredge mining.

For all of these reasons, we strongly urge to vote "YES" on SB 5322 and take this essential step to protect our invaluable fisheries and waters as well as the millions of dollars in investments Washington taxpayers have made in protecting these resources.

Thank you for your consideration of our request and for everything you are doing to ensure a bright future Washington's wild fish and waters.

Respectfully,