



Oregon

Kate Brown, Governor

Department of Fish and Wildlife

Rogue Watershed District Office

1495 East Gregory Road

Central Point, OR 97502

(541) 826-8774

Fax: (541) 826-8776

odfw.com

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Michael L. Barnes
Bureau of Land Management
Oregon State Office
PO Box 2965
Portland, OR 97208-2965
m1barnes@blm.gov



Re: Mineral Withdrawal in Aid of Legislation on Public Lands in Southwest Oregon

Dear Mr. Barnes:

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) supports the proposed five-year mineral withdrawal on public lands in southwest Oregon as proposed by the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and Bureau of Land Management (BLM). ODFW's mission is to protect and enhance Oregon's fish and wildlife and their habitats for use and enjoyment by present and future generations.

The proposed a five-year mineral withdrawal would affect 95,806 acres managed by the USFS Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest and 5,216 acres managed by the BLM. Lands included in the proposed mineral withdrawal encompass the upper portion of Hunter Creek, the North Fork Pistol River, Baldface Creek, a major tributary to the North Fork Smith River, and Rough and Ready Creek, tributary to the West Fork Illinois River.

The Illinois, Smith, and Pistol rivers and Hunter Creek support abundant populations of fall Chinook salmon, winter steelhead, and coastal cutthroat trout. Coho salmon also occur in all four watersheds. A long-term decline in southern Oregon and Northern California coho populations led to a 1997 federal listing of coho as threatened under the Endangered Species Act. Coho populations in all four watersheds are included in the Southern Oregon/Northern California Coast (SONCC) ESU.

The extraction of minerals associated with metal mining generates large amounts of waste, which creates the potential for significant releases of sediment or contaminants into adjacent waterways. The Klamath geologic province, which encompasses all of the area in southwest Oregon included in the proposed mineral withdrawal, is very erosive and prone to landslides. Siting a large-scale metal mining operation in this area would pose great risk to the fishery resources in southwest Oregon.

In summary, ODFW is very concerned about the potential for leaching metal mining wastes into Oregon waterways and the resulting long-term impacts to fish, wildlife, and habitat resources. If



you have any questions regarding these comments, please feel free to contact me at 541-826-8774.



Russ Stauff
Rogue Watershed District Manager
Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
