

February 1, 2010

Dear Senator Jeff Merkley,

As contributors to the Southwest Oregon business community we would like to thank you for demonstrating a commitment to protecting Oregon's natural treasures. We appreciate your recent letter to Secretaries Salazar and Vilsack regarding a mining moratorium in southwest Oregon. Furthermore, we support increased protections for our public lands.

Our public lands and waterways are vital assets to our regional and local economies. The Siskiyou Wild Rivers area attracts people from around the world who come to view our rare botanical wonders, fish, raft, hike, and otherwise enjoy this area. In order to maintain this area's beautiful landscapes and the sustainable economic benefits they provide, we seek your support for additional protections through permanent reform of the 1872 Mining Law and Wilderness protections.

A mining moratorium in the Siskiyou Wild Rivers is a terrific first step, one necessary to restrain the negative impacts of mining while you address the need for Wilderness protections. As you know, mining in one of Oregon's most unique natural treasures poses a significant threat to the largely pristine Siskiyou Wild Rivers area. Since 2001, when the Clinton mining moratorium was reversed, there have been over 800 new claims filed in the region. Today we anticipate an additional rise in claims due to the 2009 suction dredge mining ban throughout the state of California. This ban has prompted California-based mining interests to take an aggressive and therefore troublesome interest in the Siskiyou Wild Rivers area.

Impacts of mining are widespread; toxic runoff, leaching, and erosion from mines result in poor water quality for downstream wildlife and human communities. Mining often includes cutting of old-growth, bulldozers in and near streams, suction dredge machines in salmon spawning habitat and irresponsible road building for access. The disturbance of streambeds eliminates spawning habitat for sensitive salmon. Mining creates unappealing scars on the landscape that reduces property values and the region's appeal, and therefore affects our business community.

In recent years, the outdoor recreation industry has been a bright spot during an otherwise uncertain economic time. The outdoor recreation industry contributes well over \$700 billion to the nation's economy, supports nearly 6.5 million jobs, and generates \$88 billion in annual state and national tax revenue. A recent economic report concluded that recreation on the Rogue River alone generated more than \$30 million in 2007. Additionally, a separate report concluded that west coast residents enjoy more than \$1.5 billion in economic benefit annually from the Rogue River salmon and steelhead runs.

In order for our businesses to thrive, we depend upon our customer's ability to safely hike, camp, paddle, bike, ski, snowshoe, climb, hunt, and fish on our public lands, in the Siskiyou Wild Rivers area. While we look forward to the Obama Administration's response to your request for a mining moratorium and long-term Wilderness protections

in this region, we also encourage you to seek mining reform through Senate Bill 796 (the Hardrock and Mining Reclamation Act of 2009). S. 796 would provide important and long-overdue changes to the nation's outdated 1872 Mining Law, which has gone virtually unchanged since it was signed by President Ulysses S. Grant. Like Wilderness protections, this mining reform would protect the landscape our businesses depend on.

We urge you to take action to safeguard the Siskiyou Wild Rivers area based on its economic importance to recreation, tourism, fish, and wildlife. These beautiful lands deserve to be protected so they can continue to provide benefits to our community. Thank you for your consideration and ongoing support of our public lands, we look forward to your work in the Siskiyou Wild Rivers region.

Sincerely,

**Fly Water Travel, LLC**

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**Momentum River Expeditions**

Pete Wallstrom, Owner  
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**Kokopelli River Center**

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