

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

9/28/2015

Bureau of Land Management
Oregon State Office
P.O. Box 2965, Portland, Oregon 97208-2965

Dear Mr. Barnes,

We represent regions with rich natural resources and incredible, but often threatened, fisheries. One of the prized rivers in the Northwest, the undammed Smith River, must be protected. We have grave concerns about the potential for serious damage to occur from proposed mining operations in the Smith River's Oregon tributaries, and we have authored legislation to permanently withdraw some of these areas from future mining activity.

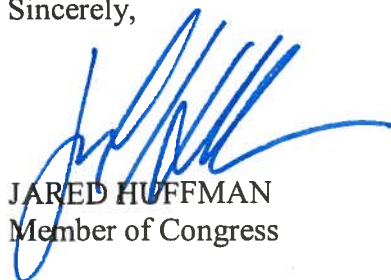
A nickel mining operation has been proposed by a foreign company on the North Fork of the Smith River, mining that threatens to harm salmon and pollute the Smith River which provides the drinking water for most of Del Norte County, California's 28,000 residents.

While the California portion of the Smith River is a designated Wild and Scenic River, its headwaters remain vulnerable to mining. Rivers in Oregon are also threatened by this potential mining effort, which is why we and Oregon Senators Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley authored legislation in both chambers to permanently withdraw these areas for mineral extraction. The Southwest Oregon Watershed and Salmon Protection Act is essential to protect the Smith River, a salmon stronghold and a world-class steelhead fishery.

The Mining Act of 1872 is hopelessly out of date and poses a direct threat to many rivers and communities in the country. It senselessly allows mining companies to profit from public lands at nearly no cost to them. That is why this legislation is needed to protect 106,000 acres of public land from new mining claims and require current claims to undergo a validation process before operating. The U.S. Bureau of Land Management and the U.S. Forest Service are considering temporarily withdrawing these areas, which we strongly support while Congress can consider the permanent withdrawal that we have proposed.

It's critical to take action now to protect the rare resources of the Smith River and its tributaries. We cannot allow public land profiteering to take precedent over the invaluable fisheries and pristine quality of the Smith River and the landscape around it.

Sincerely,



JARED HUFFMAN
Member of Congress



PETER DeFAZIO
Member of Congress