



# SUPPORT SUCTION DREDGE MINING REFORM WASHINGTON'S WATERS NEED US!

**OUR RIVERS & STREAMS** across the state are a cultural and economic lifeblood. Neighboring states throughout the PNW have updated laws to ensure their waterways are protected from the impacts of suction dredge mining, but Washington lags behind, even allowing the harmful activity in waters that provide critical habitat for Endangered Species Act-listed salmon and steelhead populations. In the 2020 legislative session, we have the opportunity to correct this with commonsense updates based on laws adopted in other states, but we need your help.

## WHAT IS MOTORIZED SUCTION DREDGE MINING?

A form of mining that uses gas-powered engines to dredge and vacuum-up rocks, gravel, and sediment from the bottom of creeks and rivers to search for gold.

## WHAT ARE ITS IMPACTS?

Scientific studies show suction dredging harms water quality and mobilizes mercury and other heavy metals. It impacts fish and watersheds by destroying habitat - literally sucking life out of our rivers.

Washington State's Attorney General, Bob Ferguson, filed a brief in support of regulating this activity. He said,

"Oregon's statute reflects a scientific consensus about the serious environmental risks posed by suction dredge mining and need for adequate regulation . . . Suction dredge mining can harm fish, including endangered salmonids, by disrupting spawning, creating unstable tailings, and killing eggs and larvae . . ."

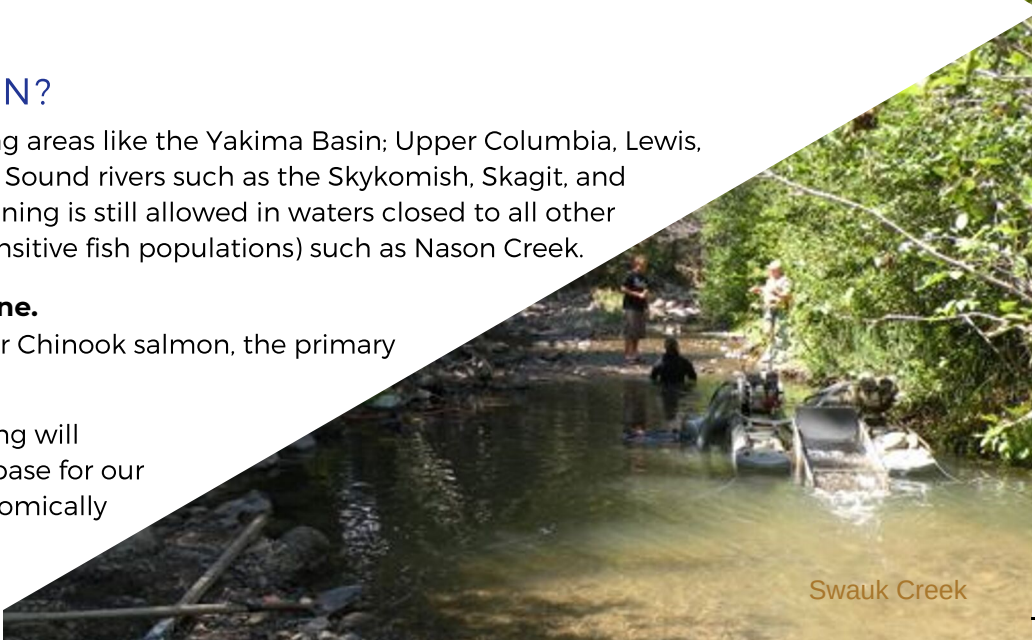
## WHERE DOES THIS HAPPEN?

This activity occurs across the state, including areas like the Yakima Basin; Upper Columbia, Lewis, Spokane, and Wenatchee Rivers; and Puget Sound rivers such as the Skykomish, Skagit, and Nooksack. In some areas, suction dredge mining is still allowed in waters closed to all other recreational activities (in order to protect sensitive fish populations) such as Nason Creek.

### **Chinook & Orca populations are on the line.**

Harmful mining occurs in Critical Habitat for Chinook salmon, the primary food source for endangered Orca whales.

Protecting our waters from motorized mining will benefit salmon and help increase the prey base for our orca population, as well as supporting economically vital sport, commercial, and tribal fisheries.



Swauk Creek



# FIXING THIS IS WITHIN REACH

## WHY NOW?

Without this update, Washington waterways and fisheries will continue to be harmed. The state does not comply with the Clean Water Act, and Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed fish species are in jeopardy. In fact, **Washington is the only state** with populations of ESA-listed Pacific salmon and steelhead that still allows suction dredge mining in ESA-designated critical habitat. Because of this, out-of-state miners travel here and create greater pressure on our streams and a dangerous situation for our waters and native fish.

## NEW LAWS SAFEGUARD OUR INVESTMENT IN SALMON RECOVERY

Tribes, landowners, taxpayers, and non-profits have spent hundreds of millions of dollars to protect and restore Washington rivers and streams. These funds are squandered without improved regulations. Let's fix this!

## SUPPORT HOUSE BILL 1261/SENATE BILL 5322

Passing these bills will protect areas most important to ESA-listed salmon, steelhead, and other native fish by prohibiting motorized mining in Critical Habitat.

Non-mechanized forms of recreational prospecting, such as gold panning, will be unaffected by this legislation and still allowed. Aquatic motorized mining operations in other areas must comply with state water quality laws and the Clean Water Act.

Numerous Native American tribes, every relevant Washington state agency (Departments of Ecology, Fish & Wildlife, and Natural Resources; Puget Sound Partnership), and a coalition of over 80 fishing, environmental groups, business, and individuals support these bills.

**JOIN US.**

[tu.org/project/suction-dredge](https://tu.org/project/suction-dredge)

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PLEASE CONTACT YOUR STATE LEGISLATORS AND URGE THEM TO SUPPORT THESE BILLS.

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