

Testimony: Ways and Means Committee

Date: April 28, 2023

Ontario, Oregon

In Opposition to SB 220:

The Oregon Legislature should understand SB 220 is not reasonable, or as presented by DOGAMI, a solution to the permitting process. The mineral permitting process of the State of Oregon is in complete disarray when it comes to mining other than aggregate sites. We in Eastern Oregon must wait for years to maneuver through the requirements of the different state agencies that have their thumbs in the process for mineral extraction efforts.

The multiple impositions of fees and assessments on top of the applicant costs to present a mining plan currently prohibits many projects from any chance of being viable in a fiscal sense. In business, everyone is aware that timing is an essential component for success and employment generation, especially in rural areas.

SB 220 appears to be an open-ended attempt to draw more private funds into a government agency, Oregon Department of Geology and Mineral Industries (DOGAMI), that has for years been unable to provide the timely services that were initially intended when DOGAMI was established. Instead of giving assistance to the private sector, the efforts to maintain a balance between the natural resource industries and service sectors have been abandoned by a political ideology that refutes the value of minerals even in the face of green technology dependency on our abundant resources. Where is the common sense??

On-line permitting correspondence and payment of fees as well as assessments are currently in existing DOGAMI procedures, but the requests for payments to applicants are in paper form.

SB 220 will not be the panacea to mend the DOGAMI/applicant relationships that have been damaged by a plethora of rules, regulations, increased fees, and attitudes that apparently focus to stymie mining opportunities in Oregon.

To ask for more fees from an already struggling natural resource work sector is just another way to defeat the attempts of those willing to take the calculated risks that the mining of Oregon's multitude of minerals entails.

Questions:

1. DOGAMI is currently understaffed by field geology expertise. There has been personnel turnover which works as a tremendous disadvantage to applicants causing negative impacts in both time and financial cost to gain permits. How is this most important issue to be solved?
2. There is no estimated cost of this proposed IT project. Is the cost capped or open-ended?
3. Who ran the numbers in projecting and then deciding on a 25% charge to the industry?
4. Were any individuals from the private sector (mineral mining) invited to have input to planning/development of this bill before SB 220 was presented to the legislature?

No entity to my knowledge within the Oregon mining industry is inclined to support this misdirected effort. It is my understanding at this date that the Oregon Mining Association and the Eastern Oregon Mining Association are not in support of SB 220. Is the Oregon legislature listening to us? The experience/expertise of these professional entities in coordination with DOGAMI could create the best solutions to solving the permit issues? However, this seldom occurs since rules or fee deliberations are in-house DOGAMI procedures/activities.

It is unfortunate that some mining consultants (who have historically been instrumental in rule writing within DOGAMI) are currently at a point of refusing to work with the current permitting process due to management decisions and delays. This is not beneficial to applicants due to financial impacts or to the agency's reputation.

Now is the time for the State of Oregon to do more for our industry so that

successful outcomes are realized rather than just layering more burdensome costs onto the industry where we really get little in return. We do not have our hands out looking for funding from State or Federal agencies. **What we do simply ask is that all members of Oregon Legislature realize the tremendous potential that natural resources can have to stabilize the budget and reduce personal tax burdens on Oregonians. There are hundreds of millions of value that could be annually realized from mineral mining within Oregon. All we ask is the ability to receive permits in a timely and cost effective way so we can work.**

The rural areas of Oregon are tired of having county budgets subsidized from State or Federal handouts. Let us return to the natural resource-based economies which funded rural counties for over a hundred years of self-sufficient management. Mineral mining, locally managed forests, and ranching/agriculture entities under best-practice methods will meet not only the fiscal needs of counties but also be the stabilization of the State of Oregon's expectations for tax revenues.

Centralized planning and management by government rarely results in across the board outcomes that produce a benefit to all, and there is no system that will ever satisfy the wishes or desires of every interested entity. But we and you can fix these issues that continue to defeat the ability to have a thriving, non-subsidized citizenry.

The people of Oregon need relief from existing taxes, more fees, and more regulations so they can once again become the vibrant and incentive based, natural resource supported economy that we once had and deserve again.

Mining is of the future. Give the miners of today the opportunity to prove the merits of industry through best practices in safety on the job, through cost effective exploration efforts, and finally with public support of **reclamation** to multiple areas of previously disturbed lands. We are capable, willing, and able to meet the challenges, but no business entity can be efficient if permitting requirements become a micro-management tool for those within the agencies who do not support mining or do not have the business skills to understand the dynamics of or the experience to lead to successful business goals/outcomes.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify on this important topic. Hopefully your decisions for **natural resource redevelopment** in Oregon can be viewed as a component of the future leadership we in Oregon expect and deserve from our elected officials.

Best regards,



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Natural Resources Advisory Committee, Baker County, Member