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**To:** <commentletters@waterboards.ca.gov>  
**Date:** Sun, Jun 17, 2007 10:16 PM  
**Subject:** Dredging & Water Quality

State Water Resources Control Board  
Division of Water Quality  
P.O.Box 100 Sacramento, Ca.95812-0100

17 June 2007

Dear Sirs,

My name is Irvin Matsalla. I dredge for gold in northern California under permit from the Department of Fish and Game.

My personal observation on water quality is very small and localized. For example, a report on the water quality cumulative effects of placer mining on the Chugach National Forest, Alaska found:

"The results from water quality sampling do not indicate any strong cumulative effects from multiple placer mining operations within the sampled drainages." "Several suction dredges probably operated simultaneously on the same drainage, but did not affect water quality as evidenced by above and below water sample results. In the recreational mining area of Resurrection Creek, five and six dredges would be operating and not produce any water quality changes (Huber and Blanchet, 1992).

Here is a study by DFG biologists:

Thomas (1985), using a dredge with a 2.5-inch diameter nozzle on Gold Creek, Montana, found that suspended sediment levels returned to ambient levels 100 feet below the dredge. Gold Creek is a relatively undisturbed third order stream with flows of 14 cubic feet per second. A turbidity tail from a 5-inch (12.7 cm) dredge on Clear Creek, California was observable for only 200 feet downstream. Water velocity at the site was about 1 foot per second (Lewis, 1962).

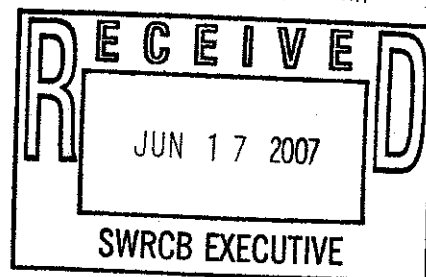
Turbidity below a 2.5 inch suction dredge in two Idaho streams was nearly undetectable even though fine sediment, less than 0.5 mm in diameter, made up 13 to 18 percent, by weight, of substrate in the two streams (Griffith and Andrews, 1981).

Hassler (1986) noted "...during dredging, suspended sediment and turbidity were high immediately below the dredge, but diminished rapidly within distance downstream." He measured 20.5 NTU 4 meters below a 5-inch dredge that dropped off to 3.4 NTU 49 meters below the dredge. Turbidity from a 4-inch dredge dropped from 5.6 NTU 4 meters below to 2.9 NTU 49 meters below with 0.9 NTU above. He further noted "...water quality was impacted only during the actual operation of the dredge...since a full day of mining by most Canyon Creek operators included only 2 to 4 hours of dredge running time, water quality was impacted for a short time." Also "...the water quality of Canyon Creek was very good and only affected by suction dredging near the dredge when it was operated."

Dredge mining has no impact on water temperature.

Dredge mining had little, if any, impact on water temperature (Hassler, T.J., W.L. Somer and G.R. Stern, 1986). In addition, the Oregon Siskiyou Dredge Study (SNF, 2001) states, "There is no evidence that suction dredging affects stream temperature."

IF you choose to not renew the state-wide water quality exemption for suction dredgers, I can nearly guarantee that you will eliminate an entire industry in this State; an industry which does a great deal to help support many rural communities; an industry that generates millions upon millions of dollars in income for California -- and would continue to do so for the foreseeable future. We hope you will carefully



consider what will be gained before you destroy our industry!  
Thank you very much for considering my comments.  
Sincerely,

Irvin Matsalla

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