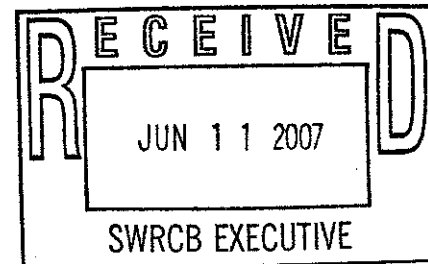


6/12/07 Workshop
Suction Dredge Mining
Deadline: 6/22/07 Noon

From: "John Hart" <highbanker@gmail.com>
To: <commentletters@waterboards.ca.gov>
Date: Mon, Jun 11, 2007 1:27 AM
Subject: Comment Letter - Suction Dredge Mining



I have been involved with suction dredging and fishing for many years, and in many various parts of the United States. Gold dredging poses an extremely low impact to fish populations and fish habitat. What few impacts there are may very well be positive and not negative.

Turbidity

First of all, the increased turbidity in the water during a gold dredging operation is confined to a small area immediately downstream of the dredge. Numerous studies in several western station have shown that water clarity returns essentially to normal within a few hundred feet of the dredge, and the suspended sediment is considerably less (in area and in concentration) than what occurs during a heavy rainstorm. As a matter of fact, I have several times witnessed trout swimming downstream of my dredge hoping for food stirred up by my operation. Given these facts, I do not understand why turbidity levels near gold dredging operations would be considered detrimental to fish habitats. Are heavy rainstorms bad for the fish? Hardly.

Extent of Operations

On any given day in California, there are a very few gold dredges in operation in state rivers. These dredges are running an average of 2-4 hours per day, and are being operated within the constraints and bounds of existing law. There are rarely multiple dredges working so closely as to impact each other, let alone other recreationalists on the river. In my many years of experience dredging and fishing, I have never seen a situation where the two forms of recreation could not be enjoyed in very near proximity.

Please maintain the public trust and make this decision based on sound scientific reports and data. There are strong opinions and points-of-view on both sides of the issue. Emotion should not prevail. Please objectively determine whether gold dredging is truly harmful to fish populations. I am confident that if you review the hard facts, you will find that no harm is being done.

Thank you.

John Hart
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