

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

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# Assembly California Legislature



**LOIS WOLK**  
ASSEMBLYMEMBER, EIGHTH DISTRICT

**Chair**  
Water, Parks and Wildlife

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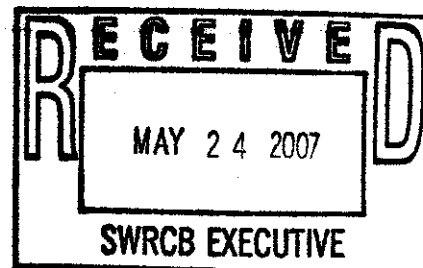
Public Library Construction and Renovation  
Wildlife Conservation

May 22, 2007

Song Her, Clerk to the Board  
Executive Office  
State Water Resources Control Board  
P.O. Box 100  
Sacramento, CA 95812-0100

Re: Comment Letter – Suction Dredge Mining  
SWRCB workshop on instream suction dredge mining

Dear Clerk Song Her:



I was pleased to see that the State Water Resources Control Board is looking into the water quality impacts of instream suction dredge mining, and has scheduled a public workshop to begin this process on June 12, 2007. I have introduced a bill that addresses the impact of suction dredging on sensitive native aquatic species such as salmon and trout, but I am also concerned with the impact of suction dredging on water quality and how these activities might affect human health.

One of the water quality impacts of suction dredging I encourage the Water Board to look carefully at as part of its review is the potential exacerbation of mercury contamination by these activities. As the board is well aware due to its activities in other areas, many streams and water bodies in California are contaminated with mercury, a legacy pollutant left over from the gold mining era. I am aware that the Department of Fish and Game, the Bureau of Lands Management, and the State Water Board have been involved in past studies that looked at the impacts of conventional suction dredges on migration and resuspension of mercury. I understand some of these studies showed that much of the elemental mercury vacuumed off the streambed is atomized, passed through the sluicebox, and then discharged back into the watershed and transported downstream. This is an issue that is in need of further study, particularly in light of what is known about the toxicity of mercury and its impact on fish and humans who consume fish.

I urge the State Water Board to look carefully at the potential role of suction dredge activities in exacerbating mercury contamination problems as one of the issues in your review of the water quality impacts of these activities.

Sincerely,

LOIS WOLK

