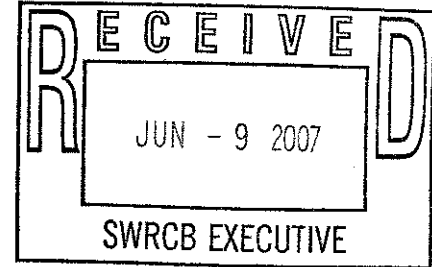


5/12/07 Workshop

Suction Dredge Mining

Deadline: 6/22/07 Noon

From: "Ross Benson" <bensonross@hotmail.com>
To: <commentletters@waterboards.ca.gov>
Date: Sat, Jun 9, 2007 3:30 PM
Subject: Comment letter-suction dredge mining



Dear Sirs,

I have been suction dredging in northern California since 1993. I have observed many dredging operations during that time. There appears to be little effect on water clarity for more than 50-60 feet downstream. I have read reports that state there is little or no effect beyond 100 feet downstream and that there is no cumulative effect when numerous dredges are operating in the river. This study also stated that all suction dredging combined had only .07% of the effect on the river bottom as does natural causes.

From years of experience, I can attest that fish love the dredgers. Every day when you go to start dredging you find lots of fish in your dredge hole. In 1997 I was dredging on Indian Creek several miles north of Happy Camp, CA. We were working about 300 yards down stream from fish spawning beds set up by the Fish & Game Department. That fall we went back to watch the salmon come to spawn in the beds. To my surprise, there were more fish building redds and spawning in the gravels we had loosened while dredging than there were in the beds constructed for them.

Dredging has a very large impact on the local economy of many communities in northern California as well as mining areas in other states. Miners spend a large percent of all the tourist dollars spent in these rural areas. The loss of these dollars would have a effect on communities that have no industry or other sources of income.

I have seen that recreational miners enjoy and take great pride in what they do and go to great lengths to protect the natural resources where they work and play. They police themselves and go a long way in conserving the area. The mining clubs and suppliers also make contributions to conservation as well as educating and policing everyone on the streams.

Your attention to these concerns would be greatly appreciated. Please make use of the available studies that confirm what I have believed for years. If you do not know about these studies, they can be located on the website for the New 49er prospecting club.

Sincerely Ross Benson