

Suction Dredge Fish and Game Public Meeting  
Tuesday March 29, 2011  
5:00 PM to 11:35 PM!

Hello Goldhounds,

You're right when you see the above time starting at 5:00 PM and it ended at 11:35 PM. We had to vacate the building by midnight so it was running close. The meeting was held at the Cal EPA Headquarters Building, Byron Sher Auditorium, 1001-I St. in Sacramento. The estimate right now is that just over 300 people attended. Goldhounds were well represented. I want a list of those of you who did attend. I might have missed some of you so please send me an e-mail if you were there. I think I counted 14 of us.

The time from 5:00 PM to 6:00 PM was a general social gathering and booth presentations by Fish and Game on various issues of the SDEIR. The actual meeting started at 6:00 PM.

Everyone there who chose to could have 3 minutes to speak and this was adhered to closely. Once this was accomplished, other speakers who were given the time of others could speak longer. It started with a brief introduction by Mark Stopher, Fish and Game, and that was followed by a brief review of what we've covered in our last meeting and in the meeting summary I sent out to you.

This was not a question and answer session. It was for public input without response from Fish and Game. I'm estimating about 70 people provided their 3 minutes worth and about 15 or so then provided their input for a longer period of time.

I'll keep this report simple and to the point. There is a uniform agreement by practically everyone that:

- There should not be a limit of 4000 permits. If any limit at all, at least 13,000 or so.
- There should not be a limit of having to stay three feet from a bank while dredging. Several good reasons were given.
- Tailing piles should not have to be leveled.
- The rule requiring the definition of six dredging locations should be eliminated. Some excellent points were made on this. It was felt this was discriminatory. For example, do fisherman have to specify where they are going to fish? Do hunters have to say which ridge and valley they will be in? No, so why do miners have to specify locations?
- The eight Use classifications were discussed in various forms, but mostly about the rivers that were being put into these classifications. The Yellow legged Frog was the highlight of the problem because this critter was the major reason for the shutdown of many of the streams. The non-existence was stated by many and Goldhound member Craig Lindsay provided an outstanding presentation on this Yellow legged Frog. Near the end of the meeting, when more time was available, Craig presented slides and valuable statistical data that showed the distribution methods used by Fish and Game was badly flawed. He illustrated what they had done and the error in their method. For example, they would how one frog sighting in Auburn, and one in Coloma and make the assumption that the frogs would therefore be everywhere in between and block that area out. I'm using this just to illustrate their approach. I had an opportunity to read his written report and it is by far the best I've seen. Well done Craig! Craig is the President of the North Fork Dredgers Association.
- The Reduced Intensity Alternative was attacked repeatedly. No one wanted the criteria involved of 14 days per year of dredging, 1,500 permits only, limit of 4-inch nozzle size without exception and ID of the dredge, motor, and placing an ID on the dredge. Some excellent points were made on this dredge ID requirement. The dredge permit is for the holder, not the equipment. The point was well made that a hunter does not have to put his hunter license number on his gun and the fisherman doesn't have to place

his license number on his fishing equipment, so why does the dredge operator have to put his number on his equipment?

- No time limit on dredging. Fish and Game wanted ½ hour after sunrise to sunset.
- Eldorado County Supervisor Ray Nutting made a super presentation as well. One very interesting issue he brought up was dealing with rafting on the South Fork at Chile Bar. He said he was all for rafting and their program but found Fish and Game lacking in their application of the law if they were after the dredgers. The Chile Bar Dam holds back water each night for the rafters. When the rafters are ready to float downstream the dam is open and the water level can go up as much as ten feet. At the end of the day the dam is cut back and the same process begins the next day. Mr. Nutting explained this did more damage to the biological life than anything a dredger could possibly ever do, yet Fish and Game does absolutely nothing about it and wants to hold dredgers to a far higher, restrictive standard. Why? He also brought out the Yellow legged Frog issue as he has hiked the rivers for years and has never seen one. He's greatly concerned about their mapping. As a side note, this same process is done at the Oxbow Dam at the confluence of the Middle Forks and the Rubicon.
- Jim Hutchings talked about the resiliency of the earth and it's ability to recover from almost anything. He talked about his mining claim and the devastating effect on his business. The economic loss he discussed was a major point for a good number of the speakers.
- There was only one really irate speaker in the house and he explained he used to be a biker from the dark side. No doubt he was. The economic impact on him was severe. This was his income for he and his family since he didn't fit in with the general society. He was trying to stay on the good side of life and this made it extremely hard.
- In my initial three minutes I provided an introductory statement that we were engaged in a serious battle and that Fish and Game was giving us two fronts to fight on, while in the meantime they were attacking from the rear with the eight Use classifications and taking out the various streams and rivers. I urged everyone to get their letters in to Fish and Game. At the end of the meeting I discussed Mental Health not being on the DSEIR. Taking away dredging affects that health by placing stress on everyone, both from an income and an enjoyment of life viewpoint. Numerous people in the meeting showed this detrimental effect.
- Goldhound members Sherry Anderson and Craig Sanderson also spoke about the issues and the difficulties placed on the dredging community. If you spoke and I missed you please let me know.
- One presentation was made suggesting a dredging fee structure based on the dredge hose diameter. It started with a four-inch dredge fee around \$45 and went upward as the proportionate volume of the material increased by hose size. The Fish and Game SDEIR did not cover the fee issue and this was the only suggested fee structure of the meeting.

I think that all the dredging issues were covered. In his introductory statement Mark Stopher requested that the presentations try to avoid duplication for the reason that once a subject was brought up multiple times would not make a difference. However, this statement rarely made a difference in the individual presentations.

It still is essential you provide your written report to Mark Stopher. All written comments now have to be in no later than May 10<sup>th</sup>. Here's the address:

Mark Stopher  
Environmental Program Manager  
California Department of Fish and Game  
601 Locust Street  
Redding, CA 96001

On the humorous side, I rode with Frank Sullivan down to the meeting, thank goodness, or I would still be lost there. We were parked in a garage where the parking building attendant left at 10:00 PM and after that a manual system of ticket punching was required to open the gate. First the ticket had to be validated not at the gate where you stopped but on the outside of the building. Then, with the validation, the ticket had to be inserted in the slot where the car was in front of the closed gate bar. Well, we did all that, but the gate bar wouldn't open. You all know Frank. I think he must have every saw made in his truck. You can just imagine what was going to happen to that gate bar, if Frank didn't just go into four-wheel drive and take it out first! It was frustrating and getting to the point of downright humorous and serious, when another fellow went through the same process on the other side successfully and saw our difficulty. He solved it quickly by saying "You have to pull your truck up closer to the gate." Well, we were back from the gate about a car length getting ready for a crunching crash and the metering system must be weight sensitive because when we pulled closer the ticket worked fine and we drove out. We both had a good laugh on ourselves saying two hillbillies from the country would never make it in the city!

This concludes my report. Thanks. Don

**This report was forwarded to MNGP by Wayne Peterson (nuggetbrain1@msn.com)  
on March 31,2011.**