

# SUCTION DREDGE *Update*

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## Subsequent Environmental Impact Report Available for Review

The California Department of Fish and Game (DFG) is pleased to announce the release of the Draft Subsequent Environmental Impact Report (DSEIR) for the Suction Dredge Permit Program on February 28, 2011. This is the next step in the environmental review process prescribed by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The release triggers a 60-day comment period during which agencies and the public are encouraged to review and comment on the document. The comment period concludes on April 29, 2011.

The DSEIR can be downloaded from the DFG web site at: [www.dfg.ca.gov/suctiondredge/](http://www.dfg.ca.gov/suctiondredge/) Printed copies of the document are also available for public review at:

- DFG Region 1 Headquarters: 601 Locust Street, Redding
- DFG Region 2 Headquarters: 1701 Nimbus Road, Suite A, Rancho Cordova
- DFG Region 3 Headquarters: 7329 Silverado Trail, Napa,
- DFG Region 4 Headquarters: 1234 E. Shaw Avenue, Fresno
- DFG Region 5 Headquarters: 4949 Viewridge Avenue, San Diego
- DFG Region 6 Headquarters: 3602 Inland Empire Blvd., Suite C-220, Ontario
- DFG Region 6 Admin Office: 4665 Lampson Avenue, Suite J, Los Alamitos
- DFG Region 7 Headquarters: 20 Lower Ragsdale Drive, Suite 100, Monterey
- DFG Headquarters: 1807 - 13th Street, Suite 104, Sacramento

A copy of the Draft SEIR was also sent to the County Libraries in all 58 Counties (*see [www.dfg.ca.gov/suctiondredge/](http://www.dfg.ca.gov/suctiondredge/) for a list of locations the document was sent to.*)

## Public Hearing Schedule

City	Date	Location	Address
Santa Clarita	Wednesday March 23	Residence Inn by Marriott	25320 The Old Rd. Santa Clarita, CA 91381
Fresno	Thursday March 24	CA Retired Teachers Association	3930 East Saginaw Way Fresno, CA 93726
Sacramento	Tuesday March 29	Cal EPA HQs Building Byron Sher Auditorium	1001 - I Street Sacramento, CA 95812
Yreka	Wednesday March 30	Yreka Community Center	810 N. Oregon Yreka, CA 96097
Redding	Thursday March 31	Shasta Senior Nutrition Program	100 Mercy Oaks Drive Redding, CA 96003

### The format of the public hearings will be:

- 5 – 6 p.m. Open House Workshop
- 6:00 p.m. Welcome and Opening Remarks
- 6:20 p.m. Highlights of the DSEIR
- 6:45 p.m. Public Comment Period

The Open House Workshop will give you an opportunity to have one-on-one discussions with staff. Individual stations will focus on key topics including an overview of the DSEIR, the draft updated suction dredge regulations, the socioeconomic evaluation, aquatic biology and water quality and geomorphology. We hope you will come early to visit the stations and talk with staff.

# Socioeconomic Report

To inform the analysis and conclusions presented in the Economic and Fiscal Impact Statement for the proposed Suction Dredge Permit Program, DFG undertook a mail survey of 1000 randomly selected resident dredgers and 533 nonresident dredgers. The survey was conducted between January and April of 2010. Seventy-one percent of the surveys were completed and returned. The results are published in the Socioeconomic Report on Regulatory Amendments which can be found in Appendix H of the DSEIR.

The report describes economic conditions pertaining to suction dredging activity in California in 2008, which was the most recent full year that suction dredging was permitted. The information focuses on the economic contribution that suction dredging activities make to regional and local economies. It also discusses the potential economic impacts of the various regulatory alternatives being considered. In addition, the report addresses the socioeconomic implications of existing

Based on 2008 Data	California Residents	Out-of-State Residents
Number of permits issued	2,946	533
Average number of trips per year	15	4
Total days spent suction dredging	83,900 days	17,350 days
Average annual trip-related spending <sup>1</sup>	\$6,170	\$4,530
Total estimated annual trip-related spending	\$14.2 million	\$2.3million
Average annual equipment expenditures <sup>2</sup>	\$2,112	\$2,893
Total estimated annual equipment expenditures	\$5.9 million	\$1.5 million

<sup>1</sup> Expenditures include trip-related items such as gasoline, food and beverages, restaurants and miscellaneous supplies and services.

<sup>2</sup> Expenditures include the purchase and maintenance of suction dredging equipment.

and potential conflicts between suction dredging activities and other beneficial uses. Information on the amount and value of gold recovered by dredgers and on related tax revenues generated also is presented.

**Analysis and Conclusions:** Suction dredging activity was reported in 22 watersheds throughout California. Overall, the top five watersheds for dredging activity (Yuba, Feather, Klamath, American, and Trinity) accounted for about 60 percent of all dredging activity in the state.

Utilizing an economic input-output database and modeling routine, an assessment of regional economic and fiscal impacts generated by the trip-related spending of dredgers was performed. Based on this analysis, trip-related spending by dredgers who live outside the watersheds generated, in 2008, an estimated total of about 50 jobs (mostly in retail and service sectors, including gasoline stations), \$2.5 million in personal income, and \$123,600 in sales tax revenue throughout the 22 watersheds.

## Hobby or Business Venture? (based on self-reported data from surveys)

Characteristics	Data
Average amount of gold recovered	3.4 oz.
Number of dredgers earning less than \$1,000	50%
Percentage of recreational dredgers	82%
Percentage of semi-commercial dredgers	16%
Percentage of commercial dredgers	2%

**Impact of Proposed Program:** Implementation of the Proposed Dredge Regulatory Program would impose additional restrictions on suction dredging in California compared to regulations in effect in 2008. Assuming that other factors associated with the Proposed Program would not affect the number of persons statewide obtaining a suction dredge permit, these restrictions are anticipated to result in slightly lower levels of dredging activity, and slightly reduced dredger spending on trip supplies and services and on equipment compared to 2008 levels.

## USGS Mercury Study Update

The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) recently completed a study to assess the effects of mercury removal options in sediment contaminated by historical gold mining. The study was conducted at the request of the Bureau of Land Management and the State Water Resources Control Board. Field work was conducted from September 2007 through May 2009 on the South Yuba River in the vicinity of the Humbug Creek confluence in Nevada County. Lab studies were carried out at USGS facilities in Menlo Park and Sacramento. The USGS examined the potential impacts and benefits of in-stream suction dredging on mercury contamination.

The complete USGS reports can be found at <http://pubs.usgs.gov/of/2010/1325A> and <http://pubs.usgs.gov/of/2010/1325B>

# Overview of the DSEIR

DFG has published a DSEIR to comply with a court order and to meet its broader obligations of environmental protection with respect to its existing suction dredge mining permitting program. The DSEIR presents a set of updated suction dredge regulations that would avoid deleterious effects to fish (as defined in the Fish and Game Code to include a variety of aquatic species) and analyzes the potential environmental impacts of suction dredging under these updated regulations.

The document includes a brief historical overview of the past permitting program governing the use of vacuum and suction dredge equipment as well as the objectives and need for updating the overall program. Additionally, the DSEIR provides a detailed description of the draft proposed regulations and the corresponding potential environmental impacts resulting from the suction dredge mining that would be allowed under these new regulations. Environmental factors potentially affected by the proposed program include:

- Hydrology and Geomorphology
- Water Quality and Toxicology
- Biological Resources
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Cultural Resources
- Aesthetics
- Noise
- Recreation
- Transportation and Traffic
- Mineral Resources

The draft proposed regulations include updated application requirements, limitations on the number of permits issued annually, equipment restrictions, requirements regarding the methods of operation and guidance regarding the location of activities, including locations which are seasonally or permanently closed to suction dredging. Key provisions of the proposed program include:

- Suction dredge permit applicants would be required to provide valid identification and contact information for the permittee or assistant permittee, a list of up to six locations where the permittee plans to suction dredge, and a list of all suction dredge equipment to be used under the permit.
- Up to 4,000 permits would be issued annually, on a first-

come, first-served basis.

- Nozzle size and hose size would be restricted, and pump intakes would require screening.
- Intake nozzles with an inside diameter larger than 4 inches would not be allowed except under specific conditions.
- The operational restrictions and methods from the previous regulations would be updated.
- Seasonal and year-round closures for various water bodies throughout the state would be identified, based on potential for impacts to sensitive aquatic species.

The proposed regulations contain conditions related to dredge sites including:

- Movement of material
- Preservation of vegetation
- Alteration of stream flow
- Spawning fish
- Fuel management
- Site preservation

In addition, under the proposed regulations, a permittee operating with a suction dredge permit will be encouraged to comply with a set of Best Management Practices (BMPs). To help achieve this goal, DFG will develop and distribute a BMP pamphlet that will be issued to each permittee under the Proposed Program. Though all the guidance would not be enforceable by DFG, it will identify requirements that may be enforceable by other agencies, and is intended to support the proposed amendments to the regulations by offering suggestions to further reduce or avoid potential environmental effects and inconveniences to others. Many of the BMPs are derived from other agencies' laws or regulations, measures suggested during public comment, the Public Advisory Committee and review of the regulatory practices of other states which would minimize environmental effects, but are either not applicable or enforceable under DFG's legal mandates. Examples of BMPs include ways to identify and avoid important cultural and historic resources, recommendations to keep encampment sites clean and advice on the proper treatment of wastes.

A detailed explanation of the proposed regulations can be found in Chapter 2 of the DSEIR.

## How to Comment on the DSEIR

DFG wants your comments to help shape the proposed program. We recognize that the public has valuable information and opinions that can help inform what the final program looks like. Your input is important! All comments will be reviewed by DFG and addressed in the final SEIR.

Comments can be:

- Ideas to modify the proposed program
- Questions about the analysis in the draft SEIR
- Questions not answered in the draft SEIR
- Any other comments you may have

Comments can be submitted in writing or verbally at public hearings (see schedule

on pg. 1). Submit **comments between February 28 and April 29, 2011 to:**

Mark Stopher  
Department of Fish and Game  
601 Locust Street  
Redding, CA 96001

**Comments can also be faxed or emailed:**

Fax: (530) 225-2391

Email: [dfgsuctiondredge@dfg.ca.gov](mailto:dfgsuctiondredge@dfg.ca.gov)

# Next Steps

The DSEIR triggers a 60-day public comment period. DFG will use all written and oral comments received in response to the DSEIR to revise or refine, as necessary, the analysis presented in the DSEIR. A final SEIR will then be prepared which contains responses to all comments and an updated version of the DSEIR. Once completed, the final SEIR will inform DFG as the lead agency under CEQA in deciding whether or how to approve the proposed program.

The updates to DFG's current suction dredge mining regulations will occur in parallel with the CEQA process. Draft regulations will be circulated along with the DSEIR. As with the DSEIR, DFG will use comments to revise or refine, as necessary, these draft regulations, and the final SEIR will contain the proposed regulations. Following completion of the final SEIR, the DFG Director will consider whether to adopt the regulations and approve the proposed program.



## RULEMAKING



## CEQA



# CEQA & RULEMAKING PROCESS

*Update on the Suction Dredge Permitting Program  
Website: [www.dfg.ca.gov/suctiondredge](http://www.dfg.ca.gov/suctiondredge)*

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