

# California Budget Committee Attempts to Prohibit Gold Mining Science, says Gold Pan California

CONCORD, Calif., June 6, 2011 (SEND2PRESS NEWSWIRE) – Gold Pan California ([www.goldpancalifornia.com](http://www.goldpancalifornia.com)), a gold mining supply shop in the Bay Area, has been building inventory of gold mining equipment in anticipation of the season re-opening in November. That anticipation is quickly fading and scorn for the California Legislature is taking its place, for owner Mike Dunn. Pointing to a hefty 1,500-page scientific report, Dunn declares “The Legislature is trying to prohibit the science from being published. This is an arrant betrayal of the public trust!”

What Dunn is referring to are the results of a 1.2 million dollar Environmental Impact Report (EIR) conducted on the practice of suction dredge mining, which the Department of Fish & Game has worked on for the last 2 years. The results conclude that suction dredge gold mining can be resumed in the State safely, and pose “less than significant” impacts.

“The public should be outraged that the Legislature is attempting to prohibit the scientific outcome of any issue, and in this case, such a misunderstood one,” Dunn states.

Suction gold miners have been prevented from working since August 2009, when the Legislature imposed a temporary moratorium on the practice until an EIR was completed. The purpose of conducting the EIR was to scientifically examine the practice and put to rest the controversy.

Until 2 weeks ago, the EIR was on track to be published and DFG regulations updated, which would allow the gold miners to go back to work in November.

But in a recent budget maneuver, 2 lethal paragraphs of language were inserted into a Trailer Budget Bill, which would prohibit the EIR conclusion from ever being published, and at the same time, kill the suction gold mining industry in California.

“We just have a lot more higher and more important things to find funding for,” said Assembly member Jared Huffman, D-San Rafael, who pushed the language in the lower house. Huffman is referring to a relatively paltry \$1.8 million budget cut to the DFG’s \$400 million dollar annual budget.

But critics of Huffman quickly criticize his statement as being minimized to the point of false.

“The impact of this Legislation isn’t a \$1.8 million cut,” states Jeff Kuykendall, owner of Proline Gold Mining Equipment located in Coulterville.

“By the DFG’s own calculations, the industry contributes \$23 million annually, and those who benefit are in the lowest income counties in the

State. In addition to the retailers of my equipment throughout the State, at least 14 other sectors of small businesses including grocery, restaurants, lodging, fuel and hardware are awaiting the EIR publication because their businesses depend on the miners getting back to work.”

Approximately 4,000 miners create the \$23 million annual industry in California, and they have been the center of controversy for a handful of environmental groups and the Karuk Tribe’s Director of Natural Resources, Leaf Hillman, who thinks the miners are to blame for low salmon numbers in recent years.

“It is Catch-22 language,” said DFG Director John McCamman, referring to the 2 paragraphs of language which specifically allow the DFG to enforce a continuing moratorium, but end the conclusion and publication of the EIR.

Mark Stopher, DFG Environmental Program Manager, stated to FOX news “It’s our view that suction dredging can be regulated in a way that we don’t have deleterious effect on fish at the population level.”

Stopher said he’s not happy about the prospect of the budget cut negating the \$1.2 million spent on the environmental review.

“Nobody likes to have done their very best for two years to deliver what the court and Legislature told us to do and have an outcome where you say never mind,” he said.

Indeed, by prohibiting the EIR findings from being published, it appears that the State opens itself to mass lawsuits from individual miners who have been paying taxes on their idle Federal mining claims while awaiting the conclusion of the EIR.

Further, since large-scale maintenance dredging and salmonid gravel augmentation projects abound throughout the waterways in the Golden State, the prohibition appears to be discriminatorily aimed against suction dredge gold miners.

And where citizen’s rights are at stake, censorship is never the right decision, budget driven or otherwise.

**About Gold Pan California:**

The company was founded in 2008 by Mike Dunn, an international gold mining specialist who has been suction gold dredge mining for 33 years.

For more information visit <http://www.goldpancalifornia.com> .

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