

The Defeat of California AB 1032

This bill, in brief, would have closed off more areas to recreational gold dredging, along with placing more red tape and cost on the permit process. Additionally permits could have been revoked at any time for a variety of reasons dealing with fish conservation. It passed the legislature but the Governor saw through it and took the proper course of action. We can happily report that Governor Schwarzenegger vetoed this bill with the following comments.

To the Members of the California State Assembly

I am returning Assembly Bill 1032 without my signature.

The purpose of this bill is to protect fish and wildlife from the potential deleterious effects of suction dredge mining. Although I appreciate the author's intent and the need to protect our fish, wildlife, and water resources, this bill is unnecessary.

Current law gives the Department of Fish and Game the necessary authority to protect fish and wildlife resources from suction dredge mining. It has promulgated regulations and issues permits for this activity. Permits for suction dredge mining must insure that these operations are not deleterious to fish and allow the Department to specify the type and size of equipment to be used. In its regulations, the Department may also designate specific waters or areas that are closed to dredging.

It is unclear why this bill specifically targets a number of specific waterways for closure or further restrictions. The listed waterways represent only a small fraction of the waters in our state where suction dredging is occurring. The benefit or protection from such a minor closure is negligible and supports the notion that scientific environmental review should precede such decisions.

Sincerely,
Arnold Schwarzenegger

Many groups and individuals fought this legislation. Thousands of emails, letters, faxes and phone calls flooded the offices of legislators and the governor. They came from all over the western states. Two groups that were at the lead on this fight were PLP (Public Lands for the People) and the New 49ers. PLP actually had meetings with the Governors staff. There were many businesses, clubs and individuals that donated money toward this battle. Members of the FMDAC were ask to make contacts on this and I hope you all did your part.

This is another one in the win column for the TH'ing hobbies. This goes to show everyone that we can and are making headway and defeating bad legislation.