



RESOLUTION NO. 223-2009

**OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF THE COUNTY OF EL DORADO
SUCTION DREDGE GOLD MINING**

WHEREAS, gold was first discovered in 1848, on the banks of the South Fork American River in the Valley of Coloma and this County took its name in 1850, from a legendary utopia endowed with vast quantities of gold; and

WHEREAS, the State of California operates Marshall Gold Discovery Park in Coloma to preserve the memory of those daring and courageous pioneers whose early efforts laid the cornerstone upon which this County rests; and

WHEREAS, ancient geological forces supplied this County with a rare abundance of the noble metal and our gold-bearing streams continue to yield rewards of commercial and recreational value; and

WHEREAS, modern mining practice, as exemplified by suction dredging in our gold-bearing streams, is compatible with traditional resource use and it is our desire to foster commercial and recreational gold mining opportunities while providing for the protection and enhancement of other important resources; and

WHEREAS, the California Department of Fish and Game's Final Environmental Impact Report on Suction Dredge Mining dated April 1994, based on several peer reviewed, scientific studies on suction dredge mining states repeatedly that suction dredge gold mining has little, if any, negative impact on fisheries and aquatic habitat; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Robert N. Crittenden, an expert with an M.S. in Marine Biology and a Ph.D. in Fisheries, did a Post-Doctoral on the fellowship of salmon habitat and concluded that the recreational mining activities of panning, sluicing and dredging enhance the salmon habitat, and these activities should be encouraged as they provide one the most cost-effective enhancement techniques as a beneficial side-effect of private recreation; and

WHEREAS, suction gold dredge operators are conscientious stewards of the environment and consistently clean up debris in the stream beds of the rivers including, but, not limited to, household trash, fishing apparatus, boating apparatus, clothing, mercury and other heavy metals as a beneficial by-product of their endeavors and are the best equipped user group to accomplish a deep in stream clean up; and

WHEREAS, according to the Cosumnes, American, Bear and Yuba Planning Committee (CABY), which is comprised of a broad representation of various interest groups such as water agencies, conservation groups, counties, regional and agriculture groups, watershed collaboratives, tribe and recreational groups, and the South Fork American River Watershed Plan dated February 2009, states as their main objective a collaborative effort to reduce mercury contamination, and protect and restore the local streams and rivers; and

WHEREAS, on August 20, 2009, in a letter by Claudia Wise, a retired physical scientist/chemist with the United States Environmental Protection Agency, refers to the California State Water Board's Water Quality Division report (Humphreys, 2005), which indicates that suction gold dredging effectively removes at least 98% of the measured mercury processed through the dredge, and suggests it is right to look to the suction dredge community for help in locating hotspots and removing mercury from the river systems; and

WHEREAS, according to the CABY Website the Nevada Irrigation District will remove mercury contaminated sediment from the Combie Reservoir in the Bear River Watershed by the process of a floating dredge system; and

WHEREAS, according to the September 2009, ICMJ'S Prospecting and Mining Journal, suction dredge mining is a verifiable revenue generating industry in California of greater than \$65 million dollars, a portion of which is generated in El Dorado County; and

WHEREAS, the State of California has destroyed this historical industry by the passage of Senate Bill 670, banning suction dredge mining from rivers throughout the State without scientific basis or studies documenting any detrimental effects, if any, of dredging on the waterways; and

WHEREAS, Joseph C. Greene, a retired Research Biologist from the United States Environmental Protection Agency stated in a letter dated June 6, 2007, to the California State Water Resource Control Board that suction dredging moves a miniscule amount of in-stream material such as sand, gravel and silt compared to any high water event in a given year and has little if any negative effects on our rivers and streams; and

WHEREAS, no other user groups or activities, which have had an admittedly greater effect on the fisheries and aquatic habitat of our California rivers, according to the Department of Fish and Game's 1994 Final Environmental Impact Report on Suction Dredge Mining, have been banned from our rivers; and

WHEREAS, there is no known salmon runs above Folsom Reservoir in the American River watershed and California's ban on suction dredge mining (SB670) was passed under the guise of protecting salmon in Northern California; and

WHEREAS, the Bureau of Land Management's South Fork American River Management Plan of 2004, set parameters and limitations in its scope that does not allow for any alternative plan which would result in significant adverse environmental impacts, and accommodates suction dredging as an acceptable use; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors strongly request the State of California and its Governor to immediately suspend SB 670, which has banned suction dredging in California, and allow the California Department of Fish and Game to continue its appropriate regulation of this economically beneficial and environmentally harmless activity, which generates over ten thousand jobs and over \$65 million dollars worth of industry for our great State.

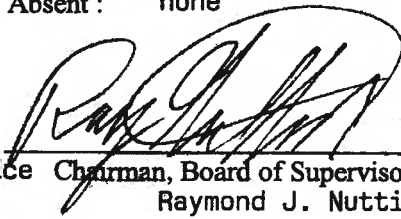
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors encourage other stream and river user groups, in recreation and business, to support and embrace the suction dredging community which is best equipped for the clean up of deeply embedded in-stream toxic metals and miscellaneous trash as a byproduct of their prospecting activities, thereby helping to restore the water quality of our local streams and rivers for the benefit of all.

PASSED AND ADOPTED by the Board of Supervisors of the County of El Dorado at a regular meeting of said Board, held the 6th day of October, 2009, by the following vote of said Board:

Attest:
Suzanne Allen de Sanchez
Clerk of the Board of Supervisors

Ayes: Nutting, Sweeney, Knight, Briggs, Santiago
Noes: none
Absent: none

By: 
Deputy Clerk


Vice Chairman, Board of Supervisors
Raymond J. Nutting

**I CERTIFY THAT:
THE FOREGOING INSTRUMENT IS A CORRECT COPY OF THE ORIGINAL ON FILE IN THIS
OFFICE.**

DATE: _____

Attest: Suzanne Allen de Sanchez, Clerk of the Board of Supervisors of the County of El Dorado, State of California.

By: _____ Date: _____