

Fish and Game struggles with gold mining in state rivers

By Carlos Alcalá, Sacramento Bee

It's gold vs. golden trout.

And gold vs. coho salmon. And gold vs. Shasta crayfish.

The California Department of Fish and Game is wrestling – under court order – with a new set of rules to control suction dredge mining in the state's rivers and streams.

Officials must take into account the health of aquatic species and aim to approve new rules by November.

It's a tough task.

Dredge miners – several thousand individuals and hobby clubs – are angry about a moratorium in effect since 2009, and anxious to get back in the rivers now that gold is hitting \$1,500 an ounce.

Many of the most popular areas are in the Mother Lode outside Sacramento. A survey of California miners listed Placer, El Dorado and Sierra as three of the top five counties for dredging visits.

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