

# State looking at revamping dredging rules

By Carlos Alcalá, Sacramento Bee

There was controversy but few surprises Tuesday as the California Department of Fish and Game held its final hearing on the contentious issue of suction dredging for gold in the state's rivers and streams.

The hearing attracted advocates and critics from El Dorado, Placer and Sierra counties – three of the top five counties for dredging according to a 2008 survey.

The department – under orders from the Legislature and a court ruling – has drafted an environmental impact report and regulations to control dredging, which sucks up river bottom gravel in an attempt to collect gold.

The report will be revised on the basis of months of public input. The department hopes to issue final regulations in November.

The most unexpected thing at Tuesday's hearing on the report and proposed rules may have been the turnout.

Mark Stopher, the agency's official in charge of developing the EIR and rules, told the the audience he had received well over 8,000 emails on the topic and had expected an overflow crowd at the 200-seat auditorium in downtown Sacramento.

**Read the whole story**