

Response to Karuk Tribe press release [YubaNet.com](http://YubaNet.com) Jan. 7, 2009

By Jim Foley

The Karuk press release is full of misinformation and outright lies that have been proven false in scientific studies and court actions.

They know that science and law have debunked their ridiculous assertions about suction dredge mining for years. They also know that if you keep saying a thing long and loud enough, people will believe it.

**Karuks:**

*“Depending upon size, location and density of these machines, they can turn a clear running mountain stream or river segment into a murky watercourse unfit for swimming.”*

The truth is that it is simple sand and gravel. A suction dredge adds nothing to the river that was not there in the first place.

“The effects of suction dredging would appear to be less than significant and not deleterious to fish.” (By **Joe Cornell**)

“Studies to date have not shown any actual effect on the environment by suction dredging, except for those that are short-term and localized in nature.” (Bret C. Harvey)

**Karuks:**

*“At the same time, opponents say, the dredging disturbs spawning gravels, killing the salmon eggs.”*

The truth is that suction dredge mining regulations do not allow miners to work when spawning salmon or eggs are in the river.

“Dredge tailings have been observed to provide good salmonid spawning ground due to the loose condition of the sand and gravel. In some places, mining debris may provide the best or only habitat.” (By **Joe Cornell**)

“A dredge could improve the intergravel environment for both fish eggs and benthos. Weighing all factors, dredging can improve the gravel environment for both fish eggs and aquatic insects.” (By **Joe Cornell**)

**Karuks:**

*“Having a dredge running in the middle of the stream affects the fishes ability to reach their spawning grounds,” Karuk Tribe biologist Toz Soto said.*

A suction dredge does not disturb fish in any way. We see fish around us and the dredge all the time.

“The effects of suction dredging would appear to be less than significant and not deleterious to fish” (CDFG, 1997)

The results from investigations presented in the environmental impact reports prepared by the state of California, Clearwater National Forest and Siskiyou National Forest, provide all the evidence required to support the determination that small scale suction dredging is “**De-Minimus**” and impacts are “**Less than Significant.**” Even the USEPA’s own study has classified suction dredging as “**De-Minimus.**”

**Karuks:**

*Toz Soto said. “There is a lot of mercury settled on the bottom of these rivers from gold smelting operations from the 1800s. Dredging reintroduces mercury to the stream creating a toxic hazard for fish and people.”*

He claims the mercury is from “smelting operations in the 1800s” Smelting is a refinery process that does not use mercury. Any mercury in rivers was deposited there by old hydraulic mining that used mercury; this is not done any more.

Mr. Soto asserts that dredging reintroduces mercury to the stream. This was the conclusion of a test (not a scientific study) done by California Water Boards. The test said dredges removed 98% of the mercury that passed through their sluice.

Mr. Soto would have you believe that it is better to leave 98% of the mercury in a river than to take it out??? What kind of skewed logic is that? Suction dredge miners are the **only** entity working to remove mercury from our rivers and doing it at no charge to our state.

**Karuks:**

*“We need the governor to take a stand with Native People and the 2.2 million anglers in California -- not 3,000 recreational gold miners,” Karuk Tribal member Leaf Hillman said.*

According to Mr. Hillman gold miners who have never harmed a fish should be deprived of their rights so that 2.2 million fishermen can kill fish. The State of California sells permits to fishermen so that they can kill fish.

How many fish do 2.2 million fishermen and the Karuk Tribe kill in one season? This Tribe has **no fishing rights**, yet the Dept. of Fish and game allows their illegal activities.

This hypocrisy is brought to a grand finale by an event called “Salmon Aid,” put on by a coalition of west coast commercial, recreational and tribal fishermen partnered with environmental organizations.

How hypocritical is it to accuse miners of killing salmon when these special interests are **killing and selling** the very fish they are telling others they are trying to protect and blaming others for the decline in the salmon population?