

North Fork of American River
Placer Land Trust

The North Fork of the American River and the Middle Fork of the Feather River have been named among other Northern California waterways in a petition to limit suction dredging for gold.

The Tsi-Akim Maidu and the Sierra Fund, both based in Nevada County, have signed onto the petition.

The Karuk tribe based on the Trinity River, California Trout, Friends of the North Fork, Sierra Fund and Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermens Associations have petitioned California Fish and Game to restrict the controversial gold mining technique, according to a press release from the five groups.

The Klamath, Scott and Trinity rivers and numerous tributary creeks also were named.

In addition to the Feather and American rivers, Sierra Nevada watersheds named include: Lavezzola Creek in Sierra County, Nelson Creek in Plumas County and the Rubicon River in Placer County.

Their call to limit the mining technique comes nine months after California banned commercial and recreational fishing off the coast for endangered salmon. Scientists have been documenting the drastic decline recently of fish species including Chinook salmon

The petition is one more measure to protect fish habitat, which already is endangered by development and commercial and industrial activities.

Dredging disturbs spawning gravels and kills salmon eggs and immature lamprey that reside in the gravel for up to seven years before maturing," said Toz Soto, lead fisheries biologist for the Karuk tribe.

"In a system like the Klamath River, where salmon can be stressed due to poor water quality, having a dredge running in the middle of the stream affects the fish's ability to reach their spawning grounds, Soto added.

The groups want Department of Fish and Game Director Don Koch to order emergency restrictions on where and when suction dredging can take place the same authority used to restrict recreational and commercial fishing when fish runs are low.