

# Important Information For Your Members

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From: "Kowalski, Ed"

Date:06/24/2014 3:17 PM (GMT-07:00)

Subject: Important information for your members

Mr. Ron Hancock:

I am writing to ask that you, as the current President of the Gold Prospectors Association of America, Nampa Chapter, distribute some important information regarding the "Occupy Idaho Waters: Dredge-In Event" planned on the Salmon River near Riggins, Idaho, from June 30-July 6, 2014. While EPA respects every citizen's right to peaceably protest on federal land, the Salmon River locations of the planned event (Shorts and Island Bars) are areas which are closed to suction dredging under the EPA NPDES General Permit for Small Suction Dredge Mining.

This area is closed under the permit in order to protect habitat for threatened and endangered species. This part of the river is designated as critical habitat for Chinook salmon, steelhead, and bull trout under the Endangered Species Act. The operation of a dredge in closed waters would be a serious violation of the law.

I recognize that the EPA NPDES General Permit has introduced restrictions since 2013 that many of your members do not agree with. We also know from our experience in working with dredge miners and your association, that there is a general desire to legally conduct this activity. That opportunity is available, as EPA's permit framework does allow for small scale suction dredge mining in many waters in Idaho, where the activity doesn't threaten or damage important habitat or other resources.

I greatly appreciate the efforts of you and your members to learn about and provide feedback on this NPDES General Permit, and encourage you to continue working with our

agency. Your involvement is critical to improving our permit framework, so that you and your membership can continue this activity in areas where suction dredge mining is allowed.

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