Introduction

This document has been written as a supplement to the “Fish Habitat Protection Guidelines for Placer Mining” in order to clarify the application of these guidelines to placer mining activities on Fraser River gravel bars as requested by the Omineca Cariboo Placer SubCommittee. The Fraser River is the only system where machine mining is permitted on gravel bars, placer activities on gravel bars of all other river systems are restricted to hand operations. Refer to the “DFOs Fish Habitat Protection Guidelines for Placer Mining - Acceptable Practices for Hand Mining” for further information regarding acceptable hand mining practices on gravel bars.

Conditions specific to Fraser River gravel bars

Placer mining activities, both machine and hand operations, are permitted to operate in the dry on un-vegetated portions of Fraser River gravel bars subject to the following conditions:

1. All operations are to occur in the dry including the excavation of gravel.

2. There is to be net loss of gravel from the gravel bar unless a surveyor assesses the quantity of gravel and submits a report to DFO enabling the department to determine the potential for gravel removal.

3. All material must either be processed on the gravel bar or replaced subsequent to processing off the site.

4. The sluice box, tailings and settling pond must be located a minimum of 10 metres from the waters edge. If water infiltrates to the ground it must not result in the entry of suspended solids into the watercourse downstream of the operation.

5. There must be no discharge of silty water into the watercourse.

6. All excavations must be leveled and contoured as gravel is processed in order to ensure the absence of any depressions that may entrap juvenile fish during fluctuating water levels.

7. The storage of fuel is not permitted on gravel bars or anywhere else within the 10
metre riparian buffer zone. Fuel storage in excess of 25 litres shall be located on an impermeable base within a berm of sufficient height to accommodate 115% of container capacity.

8. Placer mining activities are restricted to un-vegetated portions of the gravel bar. Absolutely no vegetation is to be removed or destroyed.

9. If the water level rises in elevation to less than 1 metre below the work area, operations must stop until the water level drops.

10. Equipment and machinery operating on the gravel bar shall not be operated within the wetted perimeter and must be free of any hydraulic leaks and sprayed down prior to entering the river channel to remove excess petroleum products.

11. Water intakes shall be screened in accordance with specifications provided by DFO to prevent the entry of fish.

Conclusion

The preceding conditions outline and hopefully clarify the acceptable practices for placer mining on Fraser River gravel bars. Adherence to these guidelines will protect fish and fish habitat and help placer miners comply with the Fisheries Act.