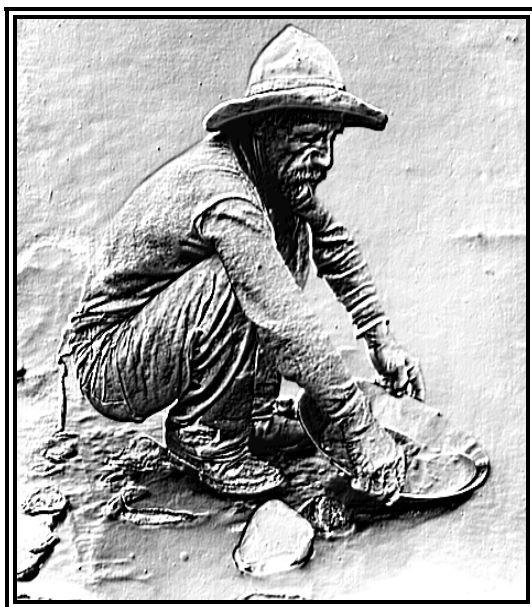


# RECREATIONAL PROSPECTING

## Rockhounding and Fossil Hunting on the Idaho Panhandle National Forests

The 2.5 million acres of the Idaho Panhandle National Forests (IPNF) is a great place to experience a wide range of recreational opportunities. Prospecting, rockhounding, and garnet digging are among the many outdoor pursuits visitors enjoy.



### General Guidelines for Prospecting, Rockhounding, and Mining on Lands of the Idaho Panhandle National Forests\*

If your operation:	You will need:
Will cause little or no surface disturbance (e.g., gold panning, fossil hunting, and rockhounding)	No permit – although some restrictions may apply depending on the area Check with Ranger District
Will involve collecting less than 1 ton of flagstone, rubble, sand, gravel, or similar material by hand for personal (non-commercial) use	A \$5.00 Personal Use Mineral Material Permit Available at Ranger Districts
Uses a small sluice or rocker box	Submit a Notice of Intent
Uses a suction dredge with up to a 5 inch intake nozzle and/or with an engine rating up to 15 horsepower	Submit a Notice of Intent and provide a current copy of approved IDWR Recreational Dredging Permit (Form 3804-A)
Uses a suction dredge with greater than a 5 inch intake nozzle and/or with an engine rating above 15 horsepower	Submit a Plan of Operation
Uses motorized earthmoving equipment and/or will cause significant surface disturbance	Submit a Plan of Operation

\*Depending on location and scope of your operations, USFS environmental analysis may be required and/or additional agencies may be involved and require additional permits.

IDEQ: Idaho Department of Environmental Quality – Cd'A Office (208-769-1422)  
 IDWR: Idaho Department of Water Resources - Cd'A Office (208-769-1450)  
 IDL: Idaho Department of Lands - Cd'A Office (208-769-1525)  
 BLM: U.S. Bureau of Land Management - Cd'A Office (208-769-5000)

### WHERE DO I GO FOR MORE INFORMATION?

The best way to ensure a bright future for recreational prospecting, rockhounding, and fossil collecting on public lands is to comply with state and federal regulations. Start by bringing your questions or concerns to the appropriate agency in an area you plan to work. You can contact one of the IPNF Minerals Contacts listed below for more information.

### IPNF MINERALS CONTACTS:

North Zone (Priest L., Bonners F., Sandpoint)  
 Jim Nieman, Email: jnieman@fs.fed.us  
 1500 Hwy 2, Suite 110  
 Sandpoint, ID 83864-9509  
 (208) 263-5111

Central Zone (Wallace, Fernan, Cd'A)  
 Central Zone Minerals Geologist  
 3815 Schreiber Way  
 Coeur d'Alene, ID 83815  
 (208) 765-7223

South Zone (Avery, St. Maries)  
 Tracy Gravelle, Email: tgravelle@fs.fed.us  
 34 Hoyt Drive  
 Avery, ID 83802-9702  
 (208) 245-4517

IPNF Minerals and Geology Program Leader  
 Jeff Johnson, Email: jkjohnson@fs.fed.us  
 3815 Schreiber Way  
 Coeur d'Alene, ID 83815  
 (208) 765-7223



## WHAT IS PROSPECTING, ROCKHOONDING, AND FOSSIL HUNTING?

Rockhounding involves the discovery and collection of small quantities of rocks, gems, or other geologic materials for personal use.

Prospecting is searching for valuable minerals. This can include collecting hand samples of mineralized rock, gold panning, using metal detectors, and operating small sluices or dredges.

Forest Service mining regulations listed in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 228 govern rockhounding and prospecting activities. A good CFR website is: <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/cfr/index.html>.

Fossil hunting allows the collection of petrified wood and a small number of invertebrate fossils for personal use. Invertebrate fossils do not have an internal skeleton. The rules for petrified wood collection are found under CFR 228, Subpart C.

Be advised that it is illegal to collect historic cultural artifacts, such as arrowheads, old bottles, etc. on state and federal lands.



## DO I NEED A PERMIT?

Prospecting, rockhounding, and invertebrate fossil hunting usually do not require a permit when there is little or no disturbance to the environment. However, a notice of intent (NOI) should be submitted to the District Ranger if there will be obvious disturbance to the environment. Based on the information provided in the NOI, a Plan of Operation (POO) may be needed. A POO may be required if you plan to, for example:

- Use explosives
- Use power equipment for excavation
- Drive vehicles off open roads or trails
- Clear or remove vegetation
- Store petroleum products or hazardous or flammable material on site
- Camp in one place more than 14 days

See this website for further POO and NOI information: [http://www.fs.fed.us/geology/mgm\\_locatable.html](http://www.fs.fed.us/geology/mgm_locatable.html). Also see the General Guidelines table in this brochure.

Forest users should be sensitive to how their activities impact the environment. Rockhounds and prospectors need to carefully refill and revegetate any excavation, no matter how small. Consideration should also be given to possible cumulative damage when you do the same thing year after year in the same place.

Water quality and fish habitat are critical concerns on national forests, so activities in or near streams must be handled with care.

Any sale or commercial use of fossils or mineral materials collected on National Forest System Lands requires a permit.

## IS ALL NATIONAL FOREST LAND AVAILABLE FOR PROSPECTING?

NO. Some areas may be excluded, even from non-commercial activities. Examples include:

- Wild and Scenic River corridors
- Historical or archeological sites
- Campgrounds
- Wilderness Areas
- Administrative sites
- Environmentally sensitive areas
- Areas "withdrawn" from mineral use

It is always a good idea to check with the local Ranger District to identify closed areas before you start. In addition, you may not work on someone else's "mining claim" without their permission. Mining claimants have exclusive rights to all minerals on those sites. Mining claim location information can be found through your local BLM office or at: [www.blm.gov/lr2000](http://www.blm.gov/lr2000).

## ARE THERE ANY SPECIAL RESTRICTIONS THAT APPLY TO SUCTION DREDGING?

YES. The IPNF recognizes the Idaho Department of Water Resources Recreational Dredge Permit. This permit allows for suction dredges with up to a 5 inch intake nozzle and/or with an engine rating up to 15 horsepower to be used in designated areas at designated times throughout the State of Idaho. A NOI must be submitted accompanied by a current copy your approved IDWR Recreational Dredging Permit (Form 3804-A).

## WHERE SHOULD I GO TO ENJOY PROSPECTING, ROCKHOONDING, & FOSSIL HUNTING ON THE IPNF?



(Garnet)

Many possibilities exist. The IPNF Emerald Creek garnet dig is very unique and popular. More information on the dig is available at our St. Maries office (208) 245-2531 or at <http://www.fs.fed.us/ipnf/rec/activities/garnets/index.html>.

Additional prospecting and rockhounding information can be found through local gem and mineral clubs as well as rock shops.

Fossils are not abundant on IPNF because most of the rocks exposed at the surface are too old to have abundant life forms.



## ABANDONED MINES

Over 1000 abandoned mines exist on the IPNF. These mine sites and workings are extremely hazardous and underground entry is closed unless authorized by permit.

**STAY OUT AND STAY ALIVE!!!**

