



White Mountain National Forest Gold Panning

Geology: Gold is associated with a wide variety of rock types (granitic and volcanic rocks in particular) and sediment types (stream gravels and stratified glacial material). Gold panning on the White Mountain National Forest is a recreational activity that occurs mainly on the Pemigewasset Ranger district on the West side of the WMNF. There is a history of gold recovery in the Ammonoosuc River basin in particular on Tunnel Brook, Little Ammonoosuc River, and the Wild Ammonoosuc River. The Baker River draining into the Pemigewasset River has also had some gold findings in the higher reaches of the watershed.

Additional information on Gold occurrences in Maine and New Hampshire are available from the State Geology websites.

Gold Panning Collecting Conditions: Because gold panning takes place in surface waters there are limitations placed on this activity by both the National Forest and by the respective States. These limitations are directed at the type of equipment the collector can use to sift gravel or other stream deposits to uncover the gold hidden in the sediment.

Hand panning with a pan and trowel: This activity is unregulated by the States and is the technique that causes the least amount of disturbance to in-stream habitat. Hand panning using a hand trowel does not require State permits and specific approval to hand pan for gold is not required.

Other collection methods: The White Mountain National Forest prohibits the use of power, mechanized equipment, or explosives for recreational collecting of geologic resources, including gold recovery activities. This includes sluice boxes, rocker boxes, and dredges.

Gold panning for recreational purposes is allowed only within active stream channels provided due care is taken to protect water quality and aquatic habitat. Excavating stream banks is not allowed.

Where streams are disturbed for recreational mineral collecting such as gold panning, turbidity levels must not exceed water quality standards needed to maintain "outstanding resource waters" as defined by the water quality regulations of New Hampshire and Maine.

Small trowels or similar digging tools for scooping sediment into the pan are allowed and will generally guarantee that turbidity levels will remain below the regulatory threshold.

Allowable Areas: Recreational mineral collecting, including gold panning, is allowed in a majority of the White Mountain National Forest. Areas where this activity is **not** authorized includes:

- Congressionally designated wilderness areas





- Alpine ski areas
- The alpine zone
- Experimental Forests
- The Appalachian National Scenic Trail
- Research Natural Areas
- Designated scenic areas
- Wildcat Wild and Scenic River

In areas otherwise open to recreational mineral collection no surface disturbance is allowed within developed recreation areas, immediately adjacent to roads, trails, other facilities, stream banks, or in other areas where such activity may adversely affect other resources or activities.

Location: The Wild Ammonoosuc River sub-basin, including its tributary, Tunnel Brook in the Town of Benton can be accessed off NH Route 112 west of Kinsman Notch or east of North Haverhill, NH.

Mineral Collecting Tips: There are significant resources available on the internet describing how to pan for gold and where to get the necessary supplies.

