

### 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 area. Recommend submitting a Notice of Intent
Will involve collecting up to 1 ton of flagstone, rubble, sand, gravel, or similar material by hand for personal use (non-commercial)	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 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) & Central Zone (Wallace, Fernan, Cd'A)  
 Mindy Vogel, Email: msvogel@fs.fed.us  
 3815 Schreiber Way  
 Coeur d'Alene, ID 83815  
 (208) 765-7452

South Zone (Avery, St. Maries)  
 Tracy Gravelle, Email: tgravelle@fs.fed.us  
 34 Hoyt Drive  
 Avery, ID 83802  
 (208) 245-6207

IPNF Minerals and Geology Program Leader  
 Jeff Johnson, Email: jkjohnson@fs.fed.us  
 3815 Schreiber Way  
 Coeur d'Alene, ID 83815  
 (208) 765-7442

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## RECREATIONAL PROSPECTING

### ROCKHOUDING AND FOSSIL COLLECTING ON THE IDAHO PANHANDLE NATIONAL FORESTS

The 2.5 million acres of the Idaho Panhandle National Forests (IPNF) are a great place to experience a wide range of recreational opportunities including rockhounding, gold prospecting, and garnet digging.



## WHAT IS PROSPECTING, ROCKHOUNDING, AND FOSSIL COLLECTING?

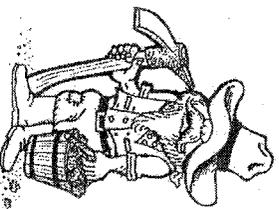
Rockhounding involves the discovery and collection of small quantities of rocks, gems, or other geologic materials for personal use.

**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>.

Authorized **fossil collecting** involves taking small amounts of invertebrate fossils such as plants and petrified wood for personal use. Invertebrate fossils do not have an internal skeleton. Vertebrate fossils such as fish and dinosaurs are not to be removed.

*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 collecting **usually** do not require a permit when there is little or no disturbance to the environment. However, a Notice of Intent (NOI) must 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. Some examples of when a POO is required include:

- Use of explosives
- Use of power equipment for excavation
- Driving vehicles off open roads or trails
- Clearing or removing vegetation
- Store petroleum products or hazardous or flammable material on site
- Camping for 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:

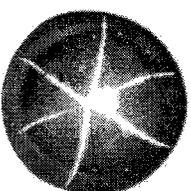
- Wild and Scenic River corridors
- Historical or archeological sites
- Campgrounds
- Wilderness Areas
- Administrative sites
- Environmentally sensitive areas
- Areas "withdrawn" from mineral use

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/rlr2000](http://www.blm.gov/rlr2000).

## 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. Each year, a NOI must be submitted accompanied by a current copy of your approved IDWR Recreational Dredging Permit (Form 3804-A).

## WHERE CAN I GO TO PROSPECT, FOSSIL HUNT & ROCKHOUND ON THE IPNF?



(Polished Star Garnet)

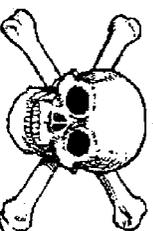
Many possibilities exist! The IPNF Emerald Creek garnet dig is very unique and a popular recreational site. More information on the dig is available at our St. Maries office (208) 245-2531 or at: <http://www.fs.fed.us/ipnf/rec/activities/garnets/index.html>.

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 prohibited unless authorized by permit.



**Stay Out & Stay Alive!!!**