

Mining

Plumas National Forest



Methods of gold mining range from panning, which causes a minimum impact on the land, to using heavy equipment, which may cause major land disturbance. Different laws and regulations apply depending on the particular mining method planned.

1. Which lands are available for mining?

Nearly all National Forest land is open and available for prospecting and mining; however, most areas along streams have already been “staked” with placer claims. It is difficult to locate areas that are not currently covered by a mining claim. If your primary interest is panning for gold, you must make arrangements with the mining claimant to work on their claim.

2. Which lands are closed to mining?

In addition to valid mining claims, some areas have been withdrawn from mineral entry to protect resource values. Those areas withdrawn from mineral entry are not open to mining, prospecting or mineral removal. For example: the Wild Zone of the Middle Fork Feather River, the Buck's Lake Wilderness and the Lakes Basin Recreation Area are closed to mining. There are also certain lands, such as those acquired under the Wild and Scenic River Act, that are not open to mining.

Contact the local Ranger District to determine if mining is allowed on specific lands you are interested in.

There is also a significant amount of private land within the Plumas National Forest. Permission of the landowner is required for any use of private land. It is your responsibility to know if you are on private or National Forest land.

3. How can I learn where claims are located?

The County Assessor's Office is the best source of information on who has filed where. They have locations of all mining claims currently being assessed. Also, the Bureau of Land Management's Sacramento Office has developed a computerized file of mining claims within the United States. BLM's website is: www.geocommunicator.gov or www.blm.gov/lr2000/. Their telephone number is (916) 978-4400.

4. What rules apply to suction dredges?

As of August 6, 2009, all California instream suction dredge mining has been suspended following the Governor's signature on a new state law. SB 670 (Wiggins), as signed into law by Governor Schwarzenegger and effective immediately, prohibits the use of vacuum or suction dredge equipment in any California river, stream or lake, regardless of whether the operator has an existing permit issued by the Department of Fish and Game (DFG).

The moratorium on instream suction dredge mining established by SB 670 will remain in effect until DFG completes a court-ordered environmental review of its permitting program and any necessary updates to the existing regulations take effect. The court-ordered environmental review required by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) is currently underway and DFG expects to complete the effort, including any updates to the existing regulations by late summer 2011.

For further information on suction dredging contact the California Department of Fish and Game, 1740 N. Market Blvd., Sacramento, CA 95834 (916) 928-5805 or visit their web site at <http://www.dfg.ca.gov/>



United States
Department of
Agriculture



Forest Service
Pacific Southwest Region
Plumas National Forest
<http://fs.usda.gov/plumas>

Plumas National Forest
P.O. Box 11500 Quincy, CA 95971
Phone: (530) 283-2050
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5. What restrictions apply concerning placer and lode mining, and use of mechanized equipment?

A Notice of Intent to operate must be submitted to the appropriate Ranger District prior to conducting any operations which might cause a significant disturbance of surface resources. Depending on the degree of disturbance, a Plan of Operations may be required. Buildings and roads may not be constructed without an approved Plan of Operation.

Gold panning is not considered to cause significant disturbance and does not require a Notice of Intent. It is always a good idea to check with the local Ranger District for any special rules or policies applicable in the area in which you plan to pan for gold.

6. What other regulations apply?

Camping is limited to 30 days on the Plumas National Forest unless you have written authorization from the Forest Service. A campfire permit is required prior to building any camp or cook fire. The fire site should be in a safe location and have all duff and vegetation removed for a five (5) foot radius.

Smoking is only allowed in an area free of duff, grass, and other burnable materials.

All internal combustion engines must be equipped with an approved spark arrester.

Motorized wheeled vehicle use off National Forest System roads is prohibited except for on designated system routes and trails.

Additional fire restrictions may be imposed during critical fire danger periods. Keep informed of current regulations by contacting the local Ranger District.

7. How can I obtain a map?

A map of the Plumas National Forest is available by sending \$10.00 to any of the Forest Service offices listed below. You may also buy one in person at any of these offices. The map is a 1/2" = 1 mile scale.

U.S. Geological survey quadrangle maps are available at many engineering, stationary, and sporting goods stores or at <http://store.usgs.gov> for \$8.00 each.

For more information please call:

Plumas National Forest
(530) 283-2050 or (888) 822-3119 TTY

Beckwourth Ranger District
(530) 836-2575

Feather River Ranger District
(530) 534-6500 or (530) 534-7984 TTY

Challenge Visitor Center
(530) 675-1146

Mt. Hough Ranger District
(530) 283-0555

Greenville Information Center
(530) 284-7126

PLEASE OBSERVE ALL RECREATION AND CAMPING RULES, AND REMEMBER, ALL STATE AND COUNTY ORDINANCES APPLY TO NATIONAL FOREST.

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