



Recreational Panning and Dredging

Eldorado National Forest



Welcome to the Eldorado National Forest.

The Forest is located near the original California gold discovery site on the American River at Coloma, and has had a rich history of gold mining since the mid-1800s. There are still numerous gold-bearing rivers and streams within the central Sierra Nevada for you to explore.

Here are some rules and guidelines relating to recreational gold-panning and dredging in the Eldorado National Forest. Your following these rules and guidelines will help protect the many resource values within the Forest, will minimize conflicts with other users, and will add to your and others' enjoyment of the Forest experience.

Dredging

You must obtain a permit from the California Department of Fish and Game, and operate within the specified terms and season of the permit. If your activities may cause disturbance of surface resources, or if you intend to be camping at a site for more than 14 days, you must also submit a Notice of Intent or Plan of Operations to the appropriate National Forest District Ranger and receive authorization for your activities. Permanent structures such as cabins or roads may not be built unless you have prior written approval from the District Ranger.

Metal Detectors

Detectors may be used, without a Special Use Permit, to search for recent coins and lost metal objects only in campgrounds and other recreational sites. Use of metal detectors to search for treasure trove, or historical and prehistorical artifacts and features, requires a Special Use Permit. Use of a metal detector to locate mineral deposits such as gold and silver on National Forest lands is considered prospecting. No permits are required for prospecting. However, if the prospecting work will disturb the land, you may be required to file a Plan of Operations with the appropriate Ranger District.

Panning

No permit is required. Suggested locations for panning include the PiPi Campground area and the Cache Rock area. For other suggestions in the Eldorado National Forest, contact the individual Ranger Districts. For either dredging or panning, it is your responsibility to determine whether you are on private land or a mining claim. Maps of the Eldorado National Forest are available at Forest offices. Please respect private land and other private rights.

Closed Areas

Some areas of the Forest are closed to (withdrawn from) mining activities. Examples of this are the Desolation Wilderness, the Mokelumne Wilderness and areas adjacent to some developed campgrounds. Be sure to check with a Forest Service officer if you are uncertain.

Note: Wheeled motorized vehicles can only operate or park on system roads and system motorized trails. Map available.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Camping

- ⇒ **Campsites must be kept clean** at all times. All garbage and unused material must be removed from your campsite.
- ⇒ Chemical toilets should be used at a site where more than one individual is staying, or if you will be staying for an extended period of time. It is illegal to dump "port-a-potties" or holding tanks in Forest Service facilities or on National Forest lands.
- ⇒ Excavation of new camping sites or parking areas is not permitted.
- ⇒ Maximum stay limit for camping is 10 days per district per year outside of developed campgrounds.
- ⇒ Please remove all of your equipment and garbage when you leave.
- ⇒ **Obtain necessary campfire permits** and be aware of possible fire restrictions. All internal combustion engines, including those on dredges, must be equipped with approved spark arresters.
- ⇒ Check for fire restrictions which will prohibit wood and charcoal fires.

Laws and Regulation For

The Preservation of American Antiquities

No person may excavate, damage, or otherwise alter or deface any historic or prehistoric structure, site, artifact or property; or remove any object of antiquity; arrowheads, worked stone, bone, wood, shell beads, pottery, bottles, tools, structures or portions of structures situated on lands owned by the United States Government. To do so without permission of the Secretary of the Department, who has jurisdiction over the land, is punishable by fines or imprisonment, or both, under Public Law 50-209; the Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979; and 36 CFR 261.9 (g, h).

Protection of streamside vegetation, fish habitat, visual quality and visitor safety require that you:

- 1) Do not remove streamside vegetation. This causes increased water temperature. Cool, clean water is necessary to sustain fish life.
- 2) Do not excavate into the streambank or disturb rooted or embedded woody plants (trees, shrubs, etc.). All mining activities should be restricted to the "wetted perimeter of the existing natural flowing stream channel" (below the water line at the time).
- 3) Do not hydraulic or high-bank outside of the wetted perimeter.
- 4) Do not alter the stream channel configuration. Channelization can destroy important shallow areas (riffles) and deeper areas (pools). Diversion of the flowing stream shall only be that necessary to direct water to a sluice box or to the extent necessary to operate a dredge and shall be removed prior to leaving a site.
- 5) Refueling and oiling of dredges must be performed outside of the stream and in a manner and location to prevent stream contamination.
- 6) Materials too large to be moved by hand should not be disturbed.

Thank you for your cooperation in following these rules and guidelines. We hope you have an enjoyable visit to the Eldorado National Forest.

May the end of the rainbow reflect from your gold pan!

Amador Ranger District
26820 Silver Drive
Pioneer, CA 95666
(209) 259-3774

Georgetown Ranger District
7600 Wentworth Springs Road
Georgetown, CA 95634
(530) 333-4312

Placerville & Pacific Ranger Districts
4260 Eight Mile Road
Camino, CA 957069
(530) 644-2324