

Gold and Washington

The search for gold greatly affected the shape of Washington's history. Many miners bound for Alaska's gold fields in the late 1800s passed through Seattle and influenced the city's development. Interest in Washington's gold-bearing streams remains strong today. Improvements in mineral prospecting equipment make it easier for the casual or part-time prospector to engage in this activity.

Do I need a permit to prospect in Washington?

Since 1980, a permit (the Hydraulic Project Approval, or HPA) has been required from the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) to mineral prospect or placer mine. Mineral prospecting and placer mining activities can harm fish and their habitat if not conducted properly. Limitations in an HPA are designed to protect fish and fish habitat while still allowing as much activity as possible. Most mineral prospecting and placer mining activities in freshwaters are permitted through the Gold and Fish pamphlet. You can print a copy of the pamphlet from www.wdfw.wa.gov or request one from a WDFW office.

If the Gold and Fish pamphlet does not cover the location, equipment, or work time you want to use, you can request an individual, written HPA. The application form is called a Joint Aquatic Resources Permit Application (JARPA). You can print the JARPA form, attachments, and instructions from www.epermitting.wa.gov. Fill out the JARPA and send it to WDFW headquarters in Olympia. In most cases, allow 45 days for processing your complete application.

The Gold and Fish pamphlet does not authorize prospecting on Washington's ocean beaches. If you wish to prospect on Washington's ocean beaches, you must be issued an individual, written HPA. You can apply for that permit by using the simplified application available from WDFW at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/licensing/mining/>.

Several other state and federal agencies have an interest in mineral prospecting and placer mining, and may require a permit.

- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- U.S. Bureau of Land Management
- U.S. Forest Service
- National Marine Fisheries Service
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- National Park Service
- Washington Department of Ecology
- Washington Department of Natural Resources
- Washington State Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation
- Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission

Local jurisdictions and tribal governments may also require permits. Contact these agencies directly (see the Gold and Fish pamphlet for contact information) or contact the **Washington State Office of Regulatory Assistance** at (800) 917-0043.

What's in the Gold and Fish pamphlet?

Mineral prospecting and placer mining in freshwaters is allowed under the Gold and Fish pamphlet with certain restrictions:

- There are two categories of prospecting:
 - a) You can use pans; spiral wheels; and smaller sluices, concentrators, mini rocker boxes, and mini high-bankers in certain portions of most locations year-round.
 - b) You can use pans; spiral wheels; larger sluices, concentrators, rocker boxes, and high-bankers; suction dredges; power sluice/suction dredge combinations; high-bankers; and power sluices only at specified locations and during certain times of the year.
- Any number of individuals of any age may work at an excavation site.
- No work on unstable slopes.
- Ganged equipment may be used, up to a certain size.
- Only larger prospecting equipment must be separated by 200 feet.
- Work times are based on updated data.
- Simplified screening criteria.
- Maximum dredge nozzle size is five and a quarter inches.
- Pressurized water may be used for leveling tailings and for crevicing.

How do I use the Gold and Fish pamphlet?

You can use the pamphlet as your permit for small scale mineral prospecting and placer mining in freshwaters by following these steps:

- Print out the Gold and Fish pamphlet from www.wdfw.wa.gov or request one from a WDFW office.
- Decide where you want to prospect or mine.
- Decide what type of equipment you want to use.
- Find your stream in the work time table to see when the location is open for work and if you need a separate, written HPA.
- See if you need to work under “Mineral Prospecting Without Timing Restrictions” or “Mineral Prospecting With Timing Restrictions.”
- Obtain any additional permits you may need from other agencies before starting work.
- Follow the provisions in the pamphlet.

What if I get an individual HPA?

If you receive an individual, written HPA from WDFW, you must follow the provisions in your HPA. In addition, you must also obtain any permits you may need from other agencies before starting work.

This publication is available in alternative formats upon request. Please call WDFW headquarters at (360) 902-2200, or TDD (360) 902-2207 for more information.

Where do I get a copy of the Gold and Fish pamphlet?

You can print a copy of the pamphlet from any computer with internet access. Go to www.wdfw.wa.gov. If you do not have internet access, ask a WDFW office to send you a copy.

WDFW Headquarters

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SMALL SCALE MINERAL PROSPECTING AND PLACER MINING IN WASHINGTON



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