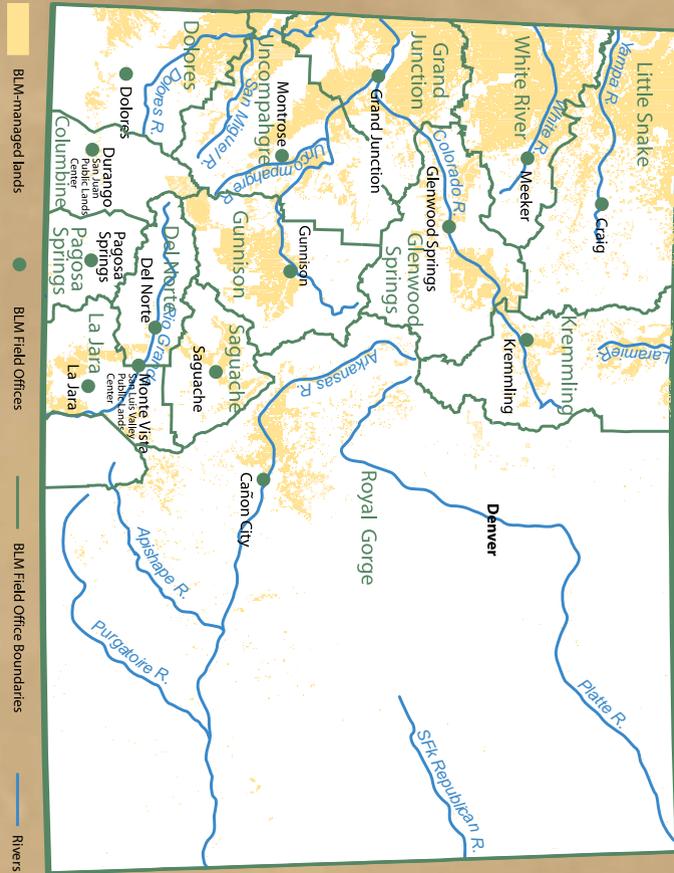


## Colorado Rockhounding Areas



For more information, contact:  
BLM Colorado State Office Public Room,  
303-239-3772

Gemstone cover photos: (top to bottom) agate geode, agate petrified wood, amazonite

Gemstone photos courtesy Colorado School of Mines Museum

# Rockhounding & Fossil Collecting

BLM COLORADO



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**rockhound (rok-how-nd)** —  
an amateur collector of various forms of minerals,  
including gold, silver, turquoise, rubies and garnets,  
and other precious and  
semi-precious minerals — also occasionally  
referred to as gemstones — plus fossils.

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COLORADO

BLM

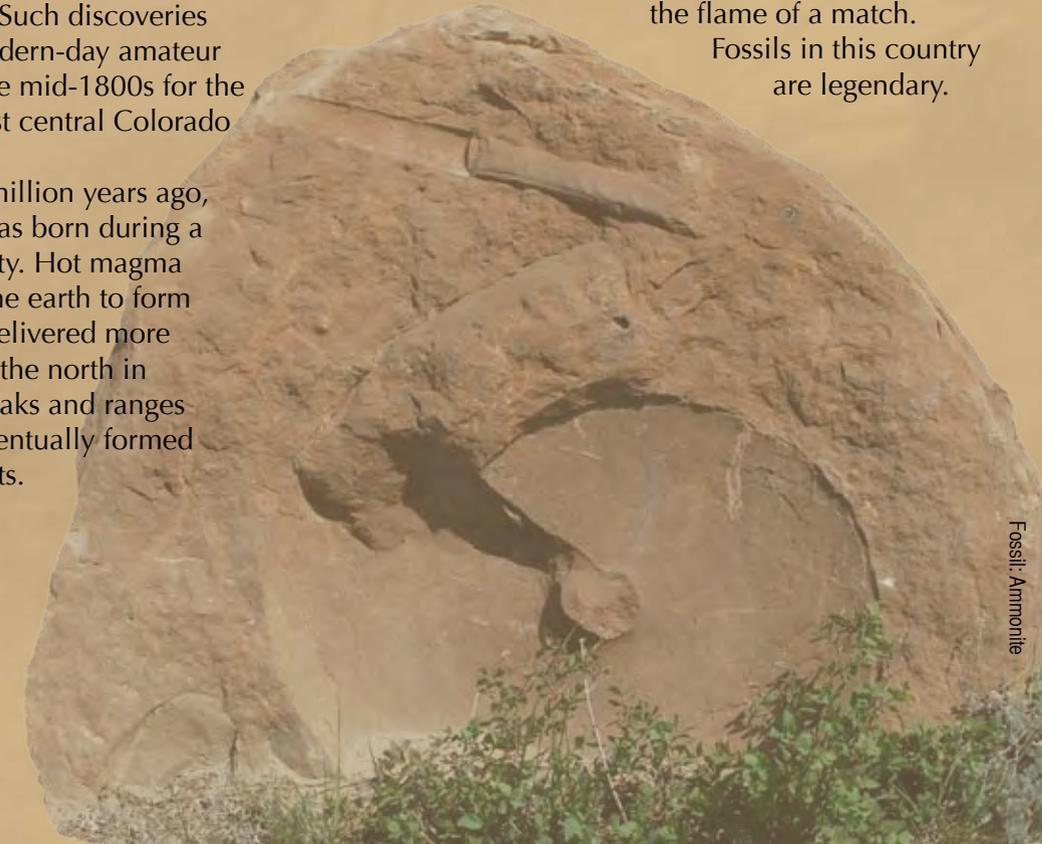
## Why are Colorado lands rockhounds' favorites?

Colorado is a rockhound's and fossil hunter's favorite, and BLM lands within the state are no exception. From the fossil fields in northwestern Colorado to southeastern and south-central portions of the state, each area boasts numerous potential rock and fossil areas with a variety of minerals. Local field offices should be contacted for more specific information.

- On the plains of eastern Colorado, agates and deposits of petrified wood and occasional traces and outcroppings of various ores, petrified wood, and fossils can be found.
- Areas along the Front Range and further west feature up-thrusts that expose ore deposits and reveal marine deposits with evidence of past ocean life. Moving further west, one can find easily accessible streams that still produce some gold dust and occasional nuggets, washed down from rugged, glacier-sculpted slopes. Such discoveries can send a thrill through the modern-day amateur prospector, just as they did in the mid-1800s for the miners who spearheaded the first central Colorado mining rushes.
- In southern Colorado some 40 million years ago, the San Juan Mountain Range was born during a period of intense volcanic activity. Hot magma coursed up from the depths of the earth to form these dramatic peaks and also delivered more subtle but important deposits to the north in the central mountains. There, peaks and ranges rich with solutions of metals, eventually formed crystalline and alloy-rich deposits.



- The canyon country of the west is a collector's paradise for minerals and fossils, as well as a photographer's feast. Deposits in layers formed over millions of years today provide hundreds of variations in colors, from textured granite in grays and ebony, to sandstones in rusty red and pink, to weaver-perfect striated oil shale, some rich enough in hydrocarbons to combust from the flame of a match. Fossils in this country are legendary.



Fossil: Ammonite

## Rules for rockhounding and fossil collecting on BLM Colorado lands

- Rockhounding is allowed on public lands except for developed recreation sites, special management areas, or where otherwise prohibited and posted. To avoid trespassing, the amateur rockhound or prospector should check with local BLM field offices for locations of existing mining claims.
- Mineral specimens, precious and semiprecious gemstones, petrified wood, common invertebrate and plant fossils may be collected on public lands without charge or permit in reasonable amounts as long as the specimens are for personal use and not collected for sale or barter to commercial dealers.
- For rocks (such as decorative rock), a reasonable amount is defined as the maximum amount which one person can fit in a 5-gallon container in one day.

The best way to collect rock samples and fossils is with a camera. While certain areas of BLM lands are currently open to some modest collecting, steadily increasing visitor traffic may eventually lead to more restrictive policies. Leaving rock and fossil samples in place both preserves and insures the enjoyment of Colorado's geologic treasures for future rockhounds.

- For petrified wood, a reasonable daily amount is 25 pounds plus one piece that one person can remove, with a maximum amount of 250 pounds removed in one calendar year. Pooling of quotas to obtain pieces heavier than 250 pounds is not allowed.
- Invertebrate fossils are the remains of animals without skeletal structures such as insects, crabs, clams, and snails. Vertebrate fossils, which include dinosaurs, mammals, sharks, and fish, or any animal with a skeletal structure, cannot be collected without a special collecting permit.
- Collection and removal cannot be assisted with motorized or mechanized equipment.
- No undue or unnecessary degradation of the public lands is allowed during the removal of rocks, minerals, gemstones, or fossils.
- Other rules and restrictions may be in effect in a particular area. Always check with the local BLM Field Office Web site by phone or personal visit.

## Rules for gold panning, dredging and sluicing

- Gold panning and non-mechanized sluicing are unregulated and allowed in most locations on BLM-managed lands without a permit.
- Recreational dredging and sluicing is regulated, and all dredgers operating on BLM-managed lands must contact local field offices and possibly submit a notice or obtain a permit before work begins.
- Casual use activities are typically limited to battery-operated equipment, dry washers and equipment that uses recycling processes.

## Code of Ethics for Rock, Fossil, and Mineral Collectors

- Respect both private and public property, and do no collecting on privately owned land without the owner's permission.
- Keep informed of all laws, rules, and regulations governing collecting on public lands, and observe them.
- Use no firearms or blasting materials in collecting areas.
- Cause no willful damage to property of any kind - fences, buildings, signs, etc.
- Leave all gates as found.
- Build fires only in designated or safe places, and make sure fires are completely extinguished before leaving the area. Check local conditions for fire bans that may be in effect.
- Discard no burning material - matches, cigarettes, etc.
- Fill all excavation holes that may be dangerous to livestock.
- Do not contaminate wells, creeks, or other water supplies.
- Cause no willful damage to collecting material, and take home only what you can reasonably use.
- Leave all collecting areas free of litter.
- Cooperate with those designated in authority in all collecting areas.

## BLM Colorado Field Office Locations

[www.blm.gov/co](http://www.blm.gov/co)

Colorado State Office  
2850 Youngfield St.  
Lakewood, CO 80215  
303-239-3600

San Juan Public Lands Center  
15 Burnett Ct.  
Durango, CO 81301  
970-375-2331

Royal Gorge Field Office  
3028 E. Main St.  
Cañon City, CO 81212  
719-269-8500

Columbine Field Office  
367 Pearl St.  
Bayfield, CO 81122  
970-884-2512

Arkansas Headwaters  
Recreation Area  
307 W. Sackett Ave.  
Salida, CO 81201  
719-539-7289

Dolores Public Lands Office  
29211 Highway 184  
Dolores, CO 81323  
970-882-7296

Glenwood Springs Field Office  
50629 Hwy 6 & 24  
Glenwood Springs, CO 81601  
970-947-2800

Canyons of the Ancients NM  
and Anasazi Heritage Center  
27501 Highway 184  
Dolores, CO 81323  
970-882-5600

Grand Junction Field Office  
and McInnis Canyons NCA  
2815 H Rd.  
Grand Junction, CO 81506  
970-244-3000

Pagosa Field Office  
180 Pagosa Street  
Pagosa Springs, CO 81147  
970-264-2268

Gunnison Field Office  
216 N. Colorado  
Gunnison, CO 81230  
970-641-0471

San Luis Valley  
Public Lands Center  
1803 W. Highway 160  
Monte Vista, CO 81144  
719-852-5941

Kremmling Field Office  
P.O. Box 68, 2103 E. Park Ave.  
Kremmling, CO 80459  
970-724-3000

Del Norte Field Office  
13308 W. Highway 160  
Del Norte, CO 81132  
719-657-3321

Little Snake Field Office  
455 Emerson St.  
Craig, CO 81625  
970-826-5000

La Jara Field Office  
15571 County Rd. T.5  
La Jara, CO 81140  
719-274-8971

Uncompahgre Field Office  
and Gunnison Gorge NCA  
2465 S. Townsend Ave.  
Montrose, CO 81401  
970-240-5300

Saguache Field Office  
46525 Highway 114  
Saguache, CO 81140  
719-655-2547

White River Field Office  
220 E. Market St.  
Meeker, CO 81641  
970-878-3800