



Public Collection of Rocks, Mineral Specimens, and Semiprecious Gemstones on Public Lands for Noncommercial Purposes¹

Frequently Asked Questions

1. May members of the public collect rocks, mineral specimens, and semiprecious gemstones on public lands managed by the BLM?

Generally, yes. BLM's regulations (43 CFR 8365.1-5(b)(2)) generally allow members of the public to collect reasonable amounts of nonrenewable resources such as rocks, mineral specimens, and semiprecious gemstones for noncommercial purposes on BLM-managed public lands.

Noncommercial means that the collector is not selling the items for a business or financial gain. Such collection is generally not allowed, however, in certain areas, such as on developed recreation sites, where there are active mining claims or other authorized mineral uses, or on lands where the mineral estate is owned privately. Contact your local BLM office regarding applicable laws, policies or resource management restrictions that may limit or prohibit rock collection for noncommercial purposes.



This Eudialyte specimen is from Windy Fork River, Southwest Alaska. Eudialyte is rare and collectible and can be a deeper crimson color. *Photo: BLM Alaska*

2. Do members of the public need a permit to collect rocks, mineral specimens, and semiprecious gemstones on public lands managed by the BLM?

Generally, no. A permit is generally not required to collect reasonable amounts of rocks, mineral specimens, and semiprecious gemstones on public lands for noncommercial purposes. However, permits may be necessary in certain instances, especially if it would involve use of certain equipment, cause more than negligible surface disturbance, or involve camping or occupying the public lands for longer than is posted for the public lands in question. Contact the local BLM office

¹ This document provides interpretation of 43 CFR 8365.1-5(b)(2) and does not pertain to the mineral disposal statutes and regulations (43 CFR Group 3000).

for more information on applicable requirements and to ensure that the public lands you intend to visit are not closed to such activity.

3. May the BLM restrict or prohibit the collection of rocks, mineral specimens, and semiprecious gemstones on public lands?

Yes. While 43 CFR 8365.1-5(b)(2) generally authorizes members of the public to collect reasonable amounts of rocks, mineral specimens, and semiprecious gemstones for noncommercial purposes, the BLM may close or limit collection in specific areas in accordance with applicable law, including, but not limited to, through the BLM’s land use planning process. The collection of rocks, mineral specimens, and semiprecious gemstones is prohibited in areas that the BLM formally closes to that activity.



A garnet encased in rhyolitic volcanic rock found in Nevada. *Photo: BLM Nevada*

4. What are the penalties associated with collecting rocks, mineral specimens, and semiprecious gemstones on public lands managed by the BLM where such activity is prohibited?

Under BLM regulations (43 CFR 8360.0-7), a person who collects rocks, mineral specimens, or semiprecious gemstones on public lands where such activity is prohibited may be subject to criminal or civil penalties.

5. May members of the public collect rocks, mineral specimens, and semiprecious gemstones in National Monuments?

Generally, yes. Members of the public may generally collect reasonable amounts of rocks, mineral specimens, and semiprecious gemstones on public lands located within national monuments for noncommercial purposes (as allowed under 43 CFR 8365.1-5(b)(2)). However, members of the public may be prohibited from collecting rocks, mineral specimens, and semiprecious gemstones that are specifically identified as monument objects in the enabling legislation or presidential proclamation designating the national monument, land use plans, or other appropriate processes such as temporary area closures.

6. May members of the public collect rocks, mineral specimens, and semiprecious gems in BLM Wilderness or other specially designated areas?

Generally, yes. Members of the public may generally collect reasonable amounts of rocks and minerals on public lands located within BLM wilderness areas for noncommercial purposes. However, in designated wilderness, collection methods are limited to non-motorized hand tools, may only cause minimal surface disturbance and must conform to the applicable management plan. For other areas designated for special management by Congress or in a BLM land use plan, collection may be limited by applicable laws or the management plan. Contact your local BLM office regarding applicable laws, policies or resource management restrictions that may limit or prohibit rock collection for noncommercial purposes.



Tourmaline is a semi-precious gem and when the pink is in the center and the green is around it, it is considered "Watermelon Tourmaline." This Tourmaline in Quartz specimen is from Black Rapids Glacier, Eastern Alaska Range. *Photo: BLM Alaska*