

BLM Wyoming

Rockhounding on Public Lands

Wyoming State Office

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www.blm.gov/wy/st/en/programs/mineral_resources.html

Where is collection permissible?

Rockhounding is recognized as a legitimate recreational pursuit on nearly all of the 18 million acres of public land in Wyoming. These public lands administered by the BLM are open to everyone to take limited amounts of rock material for noncommercial purposes without charge. Maps showing the location of public lands in Wyoming can be obtained from this office or any BLM offices (for addresses see information handout “WYNF-0007, BLM Offices in Wyoming”). You should check with the BLM field offices to become familiar with local procedures, policies and areas with authorized restrictions.

No historic artifacts, please

The Paleontological Resources Preservation under the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009, Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979 and the Antiquities Act of 1906 are designed to protect our nation’s cultural resources. These laws prohibit the unauthorized excavation, removal, damage or alteration of any archaeological and historical site or object. Petroglyphs, human graves, old dwellings, pottery, stone tools, arrowheads and other remains of Indians and early inhabitants are protected by law because they may provide important links to our past.

How about fossils?

Fossil collecting has its own set of rules. Vertebrate fossils (which includes all bones and teeth) are off limits to rockhounders, but invertebrate and plant fossils that are not of special scientific interest may be collected in reasonable amounts for personal use. No fossils collected from public land can be sold, traded or bartered. Please see the pamphlet titled *Fossils on America’s Public Lands* available at BLM offices.

May petrified wood be collected?

Hobby collection has special rules. Please see *Fossils on America’s Public Lands* pamphlet. A material site contract must be obtained from a BLM office for collection of more than 250 pounds a year, or for commercial use.

Collected but not destroyed . . .

Explosives or power equipment must not be used in excavating or removing petrified wood and may apply to other collecting. Off-road vehicle use may also be restricted. Also, fossil and/or mineral collecting may be restricted or prohibited in some areas to allow dedication of the land for another purpose. Such restrictions follow official notice in the Federal Register and the areas are posted.



Permits?

The BLM grants permits to qualified individuals and institutions to conduct scientific research at archaeological, historical and paleontological sites. These permits are issued and administered by the BLM Wyoming State Office in Cheyenne. Permits are given only to individuals holding advanced university degrees in archaeology, paleontology or a related field and are associated with an accredited institution.

Reporting archaeological or fossil sites

All archaeological or paleontological sites such as prehistoric campsites, buffalo jumps and fossils of many kinds may be of scientific interest. The sites should be reported to the nearest BLM field office for evaluation by archaeologists or paleontologists.

How about gemstones?

The private collector is welcome to take specimens of gemstones as well as common variety minerals from public lands. However, a permit must be obtained from the BLM field office if common variety minerals are to be taken in large quantities or for resale.

“Locating” Gemstones

Claims may be “located” for gemstones under the general mining laws if location requirements can be met. Collecting gemstone specimens on public land remains an accepted recreational use of the public land, however...

Don’t be a “Claim Jumper”

Care must be taken not to violate the rights of a mining claimant. Patented claims are private land and permission to collect specimens on them must be obtained from the property owner. Unpatented claims, however, are still public lands and rockhounds may pursue their hobby on such lands as long as they do not interfere with mining activities or collect locatable minerals or gemstones for which the claim is “located”. In other words, if an unpatented claim is located for jade, rockhounds can look for and collect any mineral except jade (claimants frequently locate claims for all locatable minerals). The claimant is entitled to the rights to the jade which is, for all practical purposes, his private property.

A claim owner may not legally charge fees for recreational use of unpatented claims.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For specific information on the distribution of minerals and rocks in Wyoming, request a publication catalog from: Wyoming State Geological Survey, P.O. Box 1347, University Station, Laramie, Wyoming 82073 or by phone at 307-766-2286.