GOLD DEPOSITS

Gold occurs in two types of deposits: lode and placer (pronounced *plasser*). Lode deposits consist of ore minerals in veins or series of veins or disseminated in rock. These deposits require blasting, milling, or chemical treatment to recover the gold.

When a lode deposit weathers and erodes, gold and other minerals that resist weathering remain. Some of these minerals are called ‘heavy minerals’ because a given volume weighs more than the same volume of most other minerals. Many heavy minerals are black and make up what are commonly referred to as ‘black sands’. When the weathered material is transported in a stream, heavy minerals (including gold) settle into crevices and any other depressions in the streambed and form placer deposits. Gold in the sand and gravel in the streambed can be recovered by panning.

PANNING IN WASHINGTON

The state’s streams that contain placer gold are also important for the plant and animal communities they support. To protect stream and streamside habitats, the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) administers the Hydraulics Code (RCW 75.20.100). This requires that any person or government agency desiring to use, divert, obstruct, or change the natural flow or bed of any river or stream, or utilize materials from stream beds shall obtain a Hydraulic Project Approval (HPA). A formal HPA is not required for recreational panning and prospecting if you use a gold pan, mini-rocker box, or non-motorized, small sluice box. You must have a formal HPA for sluicing and dredging.

The DFW publishes the booklet *Gold and Fish* to provide details and definitions for use by recreational gold panners. Be sure to obtain and read a copy of *Gold and Fish*, which you must carry with you whenever you are panning. The booklet also lists the classes of different streams and seasonal restrictions to certain activities on the various streams. If you have any questions, contact the DFW. Check for a regional DFW office in your local phone directory.

It is important to know where in Washington you can go to find land that is ‘open’ for recreational panning. The map on the back of this sheet shows general areas in which placer gold deposits have been found. **Not all of these localities are open for recreational panning.** Unless withdrawn, federal lands managed by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management and the U.S. Forest Service are open to panning (and prospecting). These federal agencies provide maps showing which lands they manage and withdrawn areas. Obtain a map from either of these agencies for the area where you plan to pan.

Many cities, such as Everett and Seattle, own the watersheds that supply their water. These areas are typically posted and closed to the public.

**State-owned lands** are not open for panning unless a placer mining contract for a specified parcel of land has been obtained from the Department of Natural Resources. Privately owned land and patented or unpatented mining claims are considered private lands, and you must obtain the owner’s/claim holder’s permission before you begin to pan.

If you have questions about land ownership, check with your local County Assessor; assessors maintain records of all land ownership in each county.

When doing more than recreational panning on public lands, you should check with the appropriate land management agency to see if a Hydraulic Project Approval (HPA) is required and to file operation plans with them.

HOW TO PAN

The following simple instructions will help you get started with a gold pan, which you can purchase at your local hardware store, rock shop, or prospecting supplies store.

1. First, fill your pan nearly full of the sand and gravel. Remove the largest stones from the pan.
2. Place the pan under water and be sure that all the material gets wet. You may have to mix the contents of the pan with your hands.
3. Quickly move the pan from side to side, either under water or while it is full of water, and rotate the pan’s contents (but don’t spill the contents). This action gives the gold particles a chance to settle to the bottom.
4. While continuing the side to side motion, gently tip the pan away from you. Lighter material and larger pieces that come to the top will move to the front of the pan. These can be skimmed or scraped over the brim of the pan with your thumb or hand.
5. Continue the motion described in steps 3 and 4, allowing water to wash lighter material over the brim until only a small amount of material remains in the pan. You’ll need to add water to the pan.
6. The remaining heavy material is the concentrate. If you haven’t yet seen any gold in your pan, pour out excess water until enough is left to barely cover the concentrate. Swirl the pan contents to ‘string out’ or ‘feather’ the concentrate; lighter particles will be washed farther than the heavier particles, leaving the gold (because it is the heaviest) in the ‘tail’ of the concentrate.
7. Continue swirling water in the pan to further clean the concentrates, being careful not to lose any gold. Recovering gold by panning takes practice!
Areas in Washington known to contain placer deposits. Prospecting in and along streams in central and northeastern Washington offers the greatest chance of finding placer gold. Note: Just because an area is shown on this map does not mean that it is open to panning. Many, if not most, of these areas are closed to the public. Check with the County Assessor for private ownership and with the appropriate state or federal agency for public lands. An asterisk (*) indicates areas known to be closed.

1. Shi Shi beach
   Ozette beach
   Little Wink beach
   Morrow beach
   Yellow Banks beach
   Main and Bartness
   Johnson Point beach
   Cedar Creek
   Sunset Creek
2. Ruby Beach
3. Moclips River
4. Oyhurst beach
5. Point Brown beach
6. Ocean Park beach
7. Fort Canby
   Sand Island
8. Brush Prairie
9. Lewis River
   McMunn
10. Texas Gulch
11. McCoy Creek
12. Surveyors Creek
13. Elizabeth
    Gold Hill
    Ogren (Summit area)
    Gold Links (Morse Creek)
    Silver Creek
14. Cle Elum River
    Baker Creek
    Naneum Creek
    Boulder Creek
    Bear Cat
    Becker
    Bryant Bar
    Dennet
    Swauk Mining
    Gold Bar (Swauk area)
    Nugget
    Old Bigney (Liberty area)
    Williams Creek
    Swauk Creek
    Yakima River
    Perry (Yakima River)
15. Big Salmon La Sac
    (Cle Elum River)
16. Fortune Creek
17. Ingalls Creek
    Ruby Creek
    Bloom
    Solita (Peshastin Creek)
    Shaser Creek
    Negro Creek
18. Wenatchee
19. Icicle Creek
    Leavenworth
    Wenatchee River
    Wednesday (Wenatchee River)
20. Tolt River
21. Money Creek
22. Aristo
23. Horseshoe Bend* (Sultan River)
    Sultan River
    Sultan Canyon
    Sultan
    Gold Bar (Skykomish River)
24. Bench (Skykomish River)
    Phoenix (Howard Creek)
25. Williamson Creek
26. Granite Falls
    Peterson (Stillaguamish River)
27. Darrington
28. Deer Creek
29. Deep Creek
30. Mad River
31. Entiat River
32. Railroad Creek
33. Stehekin River
34. Combination
    Nip and Tuck
    Farrar (Slate Creek)
    Lazy Tar Heel
    Alice Mae
    Old Discovery (Ruby Creek)
    Slate Creek
    Woodrich (Canyon Creek)
    Johnnie S (Granite Creek)
35. Methow River
36. Ballard (Salmon River)
37. Meadows (Salmon River)
38. Similkameen River
39. Cuba Line
    Walker (Myers Creek)
    Deadman Creek
    Mary Ann Creek
40. Goosnus Creek
41. Alva Stout (Republic area)
42. Crouse (Strawberry Creek)
43. Columbia River Placers (43–48)
44. Artesian Coulee
    Gone Busted
    Berriar Island
45. Covington Bar
    Hellgate Bar
    Keller Ferry
46. Rogers Bar
    Wilmont Bar
47. Ninemile
48. Daisy
    Johnson
    Turtle Rapids
49. China Bend
    Bosburg Bar
    Valbush Bar
50. Reed & Roberts
    Negro Creek Bar
    Northport Bar
    Negro Bar
51. Evans
52. Kettle River
53. Scheirding
    Harvey Bar (Pend Oreille River)
    Sullivan Creek
    Schultz (Linton Creek)
54. Indian Bar (Snake River)
55. Clarkston (Snake River)
56. Snake River

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