



BLM - Regulations

Collecting on Public Lands

Rocks and Minerals

A wide variety of rocks, minerals, and semi-precious gemstones are available for collecting on lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). Most BLM lands are open to rock collecting. Collectors should note that there are some restrictions, and a BLM permit may be needed depending on the amount of material you collect, how you collect it, where or when you collect, and whether or not it is used commercially.

Rocks, minerals and semiprecious gemstones may be collected on public lands managed by the BLM without charge or permit as long as:

- The specimens are for personal use and are not collected for commercial purposes or bartered to commercial dealers.
- You may collect reasonable amounts of specimens. BLM sets the "reasonable" limits for personal use as up to 25 pounds per day, plus one piece, with a total limit of 250 pounds per year. These limits are for mineral specimens, common invertebrate fossils, semiprecious gemstones, other rock, and petrified wood.
- A group of people does not pool their yearly allotment to collect a piece larger than 250 pounds of either rockhounding specimens or petrified wood.
- Collection does not occur in developed recreation sites or areas, unless designated as a rockhounding area by BLM.
- Collection is not prohibited or restricted and posted.
- Collection, excavation or removal are not aided with motorized or mechanical devices, including heavy equipment or explosives. Metal detectors are acceptable, with the exception of the San Pedro National Conservation Area.
- No undue or unnecessary degradation of the public lands occurs during the removal of rock, minerals, or gemstones.
- For pieces of petrified wood heavier than 250 pounds or situation not covered here, please contact your local BLM office.
- If you wish to obtain more than 250 lbs. of rock in a year, please visit the local BLM office to arrange to purchase a permit.

Fossils

Vertebrate Fossils: These include dinosaurs, mammals, sharks and fish, or any animal with skeletal structure. You cannot collect these fossils without a permit from the BLM.

Invertebrate Fossils: These include ammonites, trilobites, and common plant fossils such as leaf impressions and cones, and may be collected in reasonable amounts without a BLM permit.

Petrified wood can also be collected for personal use — up to 25 pounds each day, plus one piece, but no more than 250 pounds in any calendar year (43 CFR 3622). These materials must be for your personal collection and cannot be sold or traded.

Permits are given to people who meet specific qualifications. A letter from a BLM approved repository is required saying fossils or artifacts collected will be accepted. These items must be placed in the repository and cannot be kept by the collector.

Cave Resources

Cave resources, including plant, animal and geologic features, are federally protected and may not be altered, damaged or removed.

Cultural Artifacts

Cultural materials on public lands may not be removed, damaged, disturbed, excavated or transferred without BLM permit. Cultural resources include prehistoric and historic artifacts and sites, broken objects and debris more than 100 years old that were used or produced by humans. Protected materials include arrowheads and other stone tools, grinding stones, beads, baskets, pottery, old bottles, horse shoes, metal tools, graves and trash scatters.

Historic sites such as cabins, sawmills, graves, trail traces, mining areas, townsites, ranches and railroads are not open to collecting.

Metal detector use is allowed on public lands. Modern money may be collected, but coins and artifacts more than 100 years old may not be collected.