

# Mining

## Plumas National Forest

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Methods of gold mining range from panning, which causes a minimum impact on the land, to using heavy equipment, which may cause major land disturbance. Different laws and regulations apply depending on the particular mining method planned.

**1. Which lands are available for mining?** Nearly all National Forest land is open and available for prospecting and mining; however, most areas along streams have already been “staked” with placer claims. It is difficult to locate areas that are not currently covered by a mining claim. If your primary interest is panning for gold, you must make arrangements with the mining claimant to work on their claim.

### **2. Which lands are closed to mining?**

In addition to valid mining claims, some areas have been withdrawn from mineral entry to protect resource values. Those areas withdrawn from mineral entry are not open to mining, prospecting or mineral removal. There are also certain lands, such as those designated under the Wild and Scenic River Act, which are not open to mining. For example: the Wild Zone of the Middle Fork Feather River, the Bucks Lake Wilderness and the Lakes Basin Recreation Area are closed to all types of mining.

Contact the local Ranger District to determine if mining is allowed on specific lands you are interested in.

There is also a significant amount of private land within the Plumas National Forest. Permission of the landowner is required for any use of private land. It is your responsibility to know if you are on private or National Forest land. Also, the Bureau of Land Management’s Sacramento Office has developed a computerized file of

mining claims within the United States. BLM’s website is MLRS found at: <https://reports.blm.gov/reports/MLRS>. Their telephone number is (916) 978-4400.

**4. What rules apply to suction dredges?** As of August 6, 2009, all California instream suction dredge mining has been suspended following the Governor’s signature on a new state law. SB 670 (Wiggins), as signed into law by Governor Schwarzenegger and effective immediately, prohibits the use of vacuum or suction dredge equipment in any California river, stream or lake.

New state law governing the use of vacuum or suction dredge equipment, otherwise known as suction dredging, is now in effect, as of January 1, 2016. (Stats. 2015, ch. 680, sections 2-3.) The new law, commonly referred to as Senate Bill or “SB” 637 (Allen), amends Fish and Game Code section 5653 and adds section 13172.5 to the Water Code. This defines for the first time by statute what it means to use vacuum or suction dredge equipment, otherwise known as suction dredging, as the use of a mechanized or motorized system for removing or assisting in the removal of, or the processing of, material from the bed, bank, or channel of a river, stream, or lake in order to recover minerals; but also clarifying the definition does not apply to, prohibit, or otherwise restrict nonmotorized recreational mining activities, including panning for gold.

For further information on suction dredging contact the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, 1416 9th St., 12th Floor, Sacramento, CA 959834 (916) 445-0411 or visit their web site at <http://www.wildlife.ca.gov/licensing/suction-dredge-permits>



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture



Forest Service  
Pacific Southwest Region  
Plumas National Forest  
<http://fs.usda.gov/plumas>

Plumas National Forest  
P.O. Box 11500 Quincy, CA 95971  
Phone: (530) 283-2050  
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**5. What restrictions apply concerning placer and lode mining, and use of mechanized equipment?**

A Notice of Intent to operate must be submitted to the appropriate Ranger District prior to conducting any operations which might cause a significant disturbance of surface resources. Depending on the degree of disturbance, a Plan of Operations may be required. Buildings and roads may not be constructed without an approved Plan of Operation.

Gold panning is not considered to cause significant disturbance and does not require a Notice of Intent. It is always a good idea to check with the local Ranger District for any special rules or policies applicable in the area in which you plan to pan for gold.

**6. What other regulations apply?**

Camping is limited to 21 days on the Plumas National Forest per calendar year unless you have written authorization from the Forest Service. A campfire permit is required prior to building any camp or cook fire. The fire site should be in a safe location and have all duff and vegetation removed for a five (5) foot radius.

Smoking is only allowed in an area free of duff, grass, and other burnable materials.

All internal combustion engines must be equipped with an approved spark arrester.

Motorized wheeled vehicle use off National Forest System roads is prohibited. Motorized travel is limited to the designated system routes and trails. A map of the currently approved routes is available at your local Ranger Station.

Additional fire restrictions may be imposed during critical fire danger periods. Keep informed of current regulations by contacting the local Ranger District.

**7. How can I obtain a map?**

A map of the Plumas National Forest is available at any of the Forest Service offices listed below . You may also buy one online at <https://store.usgs.gov/fsmaps>

U.S. Geological survey quadrangle maps are available at many engineering, stationary, and sporting goods stores



For more information please call:

Plumas National Forest  
(530) 283-2050 or (888) 822-3119 TTY

Beckwourth Ranger District  
(530) 836-2575

Feather River Ranger District  
(530) 534-6500 or (530) 534-7984 TTY

Challenge Visitor Center  
(530) 675-1146

Mt. Hough Ranger District  
(530) 283-0555

Greenville Information Center  
(530) 284-7126

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**PLEASE OBSERVE ALL RECREATION AND CAMPING RULES, AND REMEMBER, ALL STATE AND COUNTY ORDINANCES APPLY TO NATIONAL FOREST.**

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