

Gold Panning and Dredging Information

Dredging and Panning Specifications

- Please have a copy of your “Letter of Intent” with you when operating on the Medicine Bow National Forest.
- Mechanized season of operation on the Medicine Bow National Forest is: July 01 to September 10 on all streams. This is to protect trout spawning habitat.
- Hand panning is allowed outside.
- High-banking is defined as “moving water from the stream channel via mechanical means to a location outside of the stream channel floor to process material for its gold content”. High-banking IS NOT excavating into the stream bank.
- Excavating into the stream bank to obtain material for its gold content is **PROHIBITED**. Please stay within the boundaries of the stream channel floor or when high-banking, at least 100 feet outside of the stream channel floor.
- If a hole is created while high-banking away from the stream channel, please fill in the hole before you leave the Medicine Bow National Forest.
- If stream levels are low late in the summer, gold dredgers and panners may be required to keep their operations 300 feet apart to minimize stream turbidity.
- Use small portable suction dredges with a suction hose intake of three (3) inches or less in diameter.
- Use small portable suction dredges powered by 10 horsepower or less engines.
- Only hand panning is allowed in any *Class I water*. *Class I waters* within the Medicine Bow National Forest are:
 1. The main stem of the North Platte River from the mouth of Sage Creek (approximately 15 stream miles below Saratoga, Wyoming) upstream to the Wyoming/Colorado state line. The North Platte River, above the confluence with Douglas Creek is within a wilderness area – NO mineral entry.
 2. The main stem of the Encampment River from the Medicine Bow National Forest Service boundary upstream to the Wyoming/Colorado state line. Most of this stem is within a wilderness area - NO mineral entry.

No activities on any surface waters located within the boundaries of congressionally designated wilderness areas as of January 01, 1999. This includes the Platte River Wilderness, Savage Run Wilderness, Encampment River Wilderness, and Huston Park Wilderness.

Gold Panning and Dredging Information

Recreational Dredging

A mining dredge is a device which "vacuums" up water and gravel from a stream or river and then directs the discharge through a riffle box where gold and other heavy objects are trapped. A recreational scale dredge setup commonly consists of a water pump driven by a small gasoline engine and a riffle box. This equipment is floated on inflated tire inner tubes or ridged fiberglass floats. The operator usually will wear a wet or dry type diving suit so that he may spend relatively long periods in the water comfortably. In deep water, the operator will be supplied air through a hose from an air pump, thus allowing for complete submersion of the operator.

Every year, we receive requests from people wanting to use small dredges to search for valuable minerals on National Forest lands. All mineral exploration on National Forest land is regulated under 36 CFR 228. What we refer to as "recreational dredging" is considered prospecting, and is subject to the same laws and regulations applicable to large mining operations regarding mining laws and environmental laws.

The District Ranger is responsible for determining whether or not significant disturbance is likely to occur. If significant disturbance is expected, a mining plan of operations is required for evaluation and approval before operations may begin.

It is our experience that recreational dredging usually will not result in significant disturbance in most streams under the following circumstances:

1. The dredge has a 3 inch or smaller suction intake.
2. Streams are not "Blue Ribbon", "Wild Trout Water", or a stream regulated as "catch & release" only (see state fishing regulations for these streams).
3. Practices mentioned in the State of Wyoming DEQ "Guideline 19" are followed.
4. Camping does not exceed the 21 day stay limit that applies to all visitors.
5. Dredging is restricted to the July 1 through September 10 to avoid affecting fish spawning habitat.
6. Care should be taken to thoroughly clean dredges and clothing used in the creeks to:
 - Minimize the potential spread of whirling disease.
 - Prevent introducing, non-native, invasive aquatic organisms into MBR waters; please thoroughly inspect your dredging equipment for plant and animal "hitchhikers" before using it.

If you find suspicious organisms on your equipment- especially snails or mussels, please contact either the nearest FS or WG&FD office immediately. (continued on page 3)

Gold Panning and Dredging Information

Recreational Dredging, continued

If a prospector can't meet the six circumstances, then we must conclude that significant disturbance may occur, and that a Plan of Operations may be needed. Whether or not a dredger meets the listed "rules of thumb" we request that they fill out the Letter of Intent form and return it to the Saratoga Forest Service office. There are some areas that are not open to mineral exploration, and we can help you identify those beforehand.

Camping

Camping in dispersed sites (outside a Developed Campground) is limited to 21 days.

Campers must leave the forest with camping equipment for at least 3 consecutive days.

(Forest Service Order No. 2008-34).

Camping for more than 14 consecutive days in any developed campground is prohibited

(Forest Service Order No. 2008-34).

Camping in dispersed areas may negatively impact the health of a watershed by increasing erosion, and decreasing vegetation. Please camp within the footprint of the established campsite.

- Do not dig additional fire pits.
- Pack out all trash.
- Only empty holding tanks at established dump stations outside the National Forest.
- Do not camp within 100 feet of the stream bank.
Stream bank vegetation is important for stream health.
- Control erosion outside the campsite.
Do not trample vegetation on stream banks, limit foot trails around the campsite.

Off Road Vehicles Use

All motorized use must stay on designated routes. Motorized use is not allowed off designated, numbered routes. Everyone should have a current Motor Vehicle Use Map. This FREE map shows open numbered Forest Service routes. If a route is not shown on this map it is **not** open to motorized travel.

All riders must comply with Wyoming State ORV regulations.

Gold Panning and Dredging Information

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MEDICINE BOW NATIONAL FOREST

LETTER OF INTENT

Gold Panning and Dredging Activities

NAME: _____

(please print)

ADDRESS: _____

CITY/STATE/ZIP _____

TELEPHONE _____

CLAIM OR AREA TO BE WORKED

TIME OF OPERATION **From** _____ **to** _____
(when you will be there) **(date)** **(date)**

Note: Operating season on the Medicine Bow National Forest is between July 01 and September 10 for protection of trout spawning habitat. Remember – there is a 21 day Camping Stay Limit on the Forest.

The **Forest Order** (No. 2008-34) reads: "...the following acts are prohibited... Camping, including leaving of camping equipment or personal property, outside of Forest Service developed campgrounds for a period longer than 21 days without leaving the National Forest and/or National Grassland for a minimum of three (3) consecutive days."

TYPE OF EQUIPMENT USED _____

Note: State of Wyoming DEQ Guideline #19 is still applicable.

WHERE WILL YOU BE STAYING OR CAMPING _____

TYPE OF VEHICLE(s) _____

And LICENSE NUMBER(s) _____

SIGNATURE _____

DATE _____

Submit to Brush Creek/Hayden Ranger District

P.O. Box 249; 2171 Highway 130

Saratoga, WY 82331

APPROVED BY _____ (authorized officer)