

2012 - with 2011

## Recreational Collection Of Minerals & Gold In The Tellico Ranger District

2012

*Recreational, non-commercial mineral collecting is a recognized use of National Forest System lands. Certain requirements and restrictions are in place to protect you and the environment.*

### **All mineral collecting, including gold panning, is subject to the following requirements and restrictions**

**Recreational mineral collecting is not allowed in wilderness areas or wilderness study areas in the Tellico Ranger District.** This includes; Bald River Gorge Wilderness, Citico Creek Wilderness, Joyce Kilmer/Slickrock Wilderness, Upper Bald River Wilderness Study Area, and the Joyce Kilmer/Slickrock Addition Wilderness Study Area.

Streamside vegetation must not be damaged or removed.

**Disturbance from gold collecting including digging, excavating, or dredging may only occur in the stream bed below the water line and must not occur within 12 inches of the stream banks.**

Stream banks must be left undisturbed.

Reject material from gold collecting (sands, gravels, cobbles) must be reshaped and smoothed to appear natural. It should be used to fill any excavated holes in the stream. It must not

be left in piles in the stream bed or along the stream bank. It must not be placed to redirect stream currents.

Dams for sluices must be dismantled daily.

Mercury may not be used on National Forest System lands to recover or process gold.

Collection or removal of historical and pre-historical objects or artifacts, such as arrowheads or pottery shards, is prohibited.

Collection and camping areas must be left clear of all litter and refuse. Pack it in; pack it out!

Camping is limited to 14 consecutive days at one location. After the 14th day, the camp must be moved at least 1 mile for a minimum of 7 days before returning (Supervisor's Order 334).

Metal detectors are allowed only at Indian Boundary Recreation Area Beach (Supervisor's Order 344)

**Registration is not required for the use of non-mechanized (no moving parts) equipment, such as hand tools, gold pans, classifiers or sieves, and some sluice boxes. It is also not required for non-motorized, hand-operated sucker tubes.**

**You must register annually and in person at the Tellico Ranger District office and have proof of registration if you will be using any type of motorized equipment, such as dredges, pumps, and some types of sluice boxes or mechanized (with moving parts) equipment other than sucker tubes.**

Registration is not transferable and expires at the end of the calendar year in which it is issued. You must have proof of registration available for inspection when operating mechanized or motorized equipment for mineral collecting on National Forest System lands in the Tellico Ranger District. All adults (18 years old or older) must have individual proof of registration.

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2013 - withdrawn

## Recreational Collection Of Minerals & Gold From The Tellico Ranger District

2013

*Recreational, non-commercial mineral collecting is a recognized use of National Forest System lands. Certain requirements and restrictions are in place to protect you and the environment.*

Recreational mineral collecting is not allowed in the following areas of the Tellico Ranger District: Bald River Gorge Wilderness, Citico Creek Wilderness, Joyce Kilmer/Slickrock Wilderness, Upper Bald River Wilderness Study Area, Joyce Kilmer/Slickrock Addition Wilderness Study Area, and Citico Creek and tributaries from Bark Camp Creek downstream (Bark Camp Creek is shown as Back Camp on some maps).

**Effective in 2013, registration is required for all forms of mineral and gold collection, including panning. You must register annually and in person at the Tellico Ranger Station.**

**Registration is not transferable and expires at the end of the calendar year in which it is issued. All adults (18 years old or older) must have individual proof of registration. Individuals younger than 18 must be accompanied by an adult with proof of registration.** You must have proof of registration available for inspection when panning, dredging, or conducting any other form of mineral collecting on National Forest System lands in the Tellico Ranger District.

**All mineral collecting, including gold panning, is subject to the following requirements and restrictions.**

Streamside vegetation must not be damaged or removed. Stream banks must be left undisturbed.

**With the exception of crevassing in exposed bedrock, disturbance from gold collecting including digging, excavating, or dredging may only occur in the stream bed below the water line and 12 inches from the edge of the water.**

No digging, excavation, or dredging within 20 feet of Forest Service Trail 117, the Unicoi Mountain Trail, or the powerline access crossing Doc Rogers Fields.

Digging, excavation, or dredging shall not affect or interfere with any existing habitat improvement structures, stream channel improvements, gauging stations, or stream diversions.

Moving boulders or large woody debris is prohibited. The use of pry bars, chisels, wedges, shovels, etc. to remove, or break layers of bedrock is prohibited.

Reject material (sands, gravels, cobbles) must be used to fill excavated holes in the stream; any left-over material should be reshaped and smoothed to appear natural. It must not be left in piles in the

stream bed or along the stream bank. It must not be placed to redirect stream currents.

Sluice dams must be dismantled daily and the materials returned to as close to their original location as possible.

No chemical processing of gold-bearing materials shall be done within 200 feet of a stream. Mercury shall not be used on National Forest System lands.

All operations shall take place during daylight hours.

Collection or removal of historical and pre-historical objects or artifacts, such as arrowheads or pottery shards, is prohibited.

No litter or refuse can be left in collection or camping areas. You bring it in; you take it out.

Camping is limited to 14 consecutive days at one location. After the 14th day, the camp must be moved at least 1 mile for a minimum of 7 days before returning (Supervisor's Order 334).

Metal detectors are allowed only at Indian Boundary Recreation Area Beach (Supervisor's Order 344).

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**Motorized or mechanized equipment subject to the following additional requirements and restrictions includes** any type of motorized equipment, such as dredges or pumps and some types of sluice boxes or other equipment with moving parts. It does not include hand tools, gold pans, classifiers or sieves, and some sluice boxes, or hand-operated sucker tubes.

**Use of motorized or mechanized equipment is allowed in the following areas only:**

- Tellico River - the river and its tributaries from the junction of Turkey Creek and the Tellico River downstream to the National Forest Boundary. This does not include any portion of Turkey Creek
- Coker Creek – between Unicoi Lakes Road and Joe Brown Highway (locally known as Doc Rogers Fields) from January 1 to February 29 and from September 1 to December 31.

**Use of motorized or mechanized equipment is also subject to the following requirements and restrictions:**

Hydraulic mining operations of any type, such as highbanking, which washes material from the stream bank into the water is prohibited.

The use of winches to move boulders or large woody debris is prohibited.

The use of highbankers to process materials on the stream bank or floodplain is prohibited.

The dredge/vacuum/pump engine may not exceed 10 H.P. (2 to 4 cycle).

Dredge/vacuum opening may not exceed 4 inches.

All engines must be equipped with a muffler and spark arrestor.

Motorized equipment must be removed from the stream and moved at least 50 feet from the

stream or to an established parking area to be refueled and/or serviced. Extra fuel must be stored at a parked vehicle when not in use.

No petroleum products or chemicals shall enter the stream at any time.

Operating dredges must be at least 200 feet apart as measured along the stream.

All equipment must be removed from the stream overnight.

No dredging within 50 feet of a bridge support or culverted road crossing.

Dredge anchorage systems shall not restrict water-based recreation; free, unobstructed access across the stream channel and downstream must be maintained at all times.

These requirements apply only to National Forest System lands. There are private lands within the boundaries of the District. **Please respect private property!**

It is your responsibility to know where you are relative to private lands, wilderness or wilderness study areas, and areas where use of mechanized equipment is allowed. Maps and additional information are available at

[http://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE\\_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb5274403.pdf](http://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb5274403.pdf)

Your use of an area is not exclusive and you may find other individuals collecting gold and other water-based recreational activities, such as kayaking or fishing, occurring in the same locations.

*For additional information contact the Tellico Ranger Station at 423-253-8400 or 250 Ranger Station Road, Tellico Plains, TN 37385.*

*Business hours are 8 am to 4:30 pm Monday through Friday.*

*The office is closed on all federal holidays.*





**USDA Forest Service – Cherokee National Forest**  
Tellico Ranger District



**Fact Sheet – Gold Collecting**

**2016**

Recreational mineral collecting is a recognized use of National Forest System land. Interest in this activity has grown over the past several years. Certain requirements and restrictions are in place to protect you and the environment.

**Protecting the natural resources:**

Numerous streams in and adjacent to the Tellico Ranger District contain species designated as “deemed in need of management” by the State of Tennessee and/or have Federally or State listed Threatened and Endangered (T&E) species in them.

Virtually all streams in the Tellico Ranger District are tributaries to the Hiwassee River or the Tellico River. Both of these rivers provide T&E “critical habitat” for several aquatic species. Water quality is of the utmost concern.

Monitoring of Coker Creek shows that recreational gold collecting has significantly altered the structure of the macroinvertebrate community; that fine sediment deposits are well outside the normal range for mountain streams and indicate a serious disturbance within the watershed; the score for the number of organisms found on the stream bottom was on the lowest end of the scale and warranted impaired stream status; and elemental mercury is present in the substrate and is often collected in sluices as it is disturbed from sediment.

Through the Clean Water Act and by agreement with the Tennessee Department of Environment & Conservation (TDEC), the Forest Service is working to ensure that streams are protected and water quality standards are met. Actions by the Forest Service and activities in the Cherokee National Forest must be consistent with the rules and standards developed by TDEC.

**The use of mechanized or motorized equipment is prohibited for gold collecting:**

Based on monitoring data and field observations the use of gold collecting dredges and other mechanized Class 2 uses in the Cherokee National Forest are prohibited.

Class 1 (hand panning) uses such as garden trowels, pans, 5 gallon buckets and classifier screens are permitted for gold collecting in designated streams in the Cherokee National Forest.

The following streams are designated as Class 1 hand collecting sites in Cherokee National Forest:

Lyons Creek  
Wildcat Creek

**For more information:**

For designated stream maps and additional information contact:

Tellico Ranger District  
250 Ranger Station Road  
Tellico Plains, TN 37385  
(423) 253-8400