

**WDEQ/LQD offers two  
Guidance documents to  
help with your  
prospecting and  
exploration plans.**

**Guideline 16:** License to Explore for Minerals by Dozing

- ◆ Guideline 16 provides detailed instructions on how to apply for a License to Explore.
- ◆ Guideline 16 is for non-recreational exploration activities.

**Guideline 19:** Recreational Prospecting in Wyoming (Panning, Dredging, and Sluicing).

- ◆ All prospectors should refer to Guideline 19 to determine whether planned exploration is considered “recreational”.
- ◆ Guideline 19 explains how to stay within the “recreational” category of exploration.

Feel free to ask for a copy of the above guidelines.



**US Forest Service**

(307) 745-2300 (Laramie—Medicine Bow Nat. Forest)  
(307) 674-2600 (Sheridan—Big Horn Nat. Forest)  
(307) 527-6241 (Shoshone Nat. Forest)  
(307) 739-5500 (Jackson—Bridger-Teton Nat. Forest)  
(307) 332-5460 (Lander—Ranger Office)

**Bureau of Land Management**

(307) 332-8400 (Lander) <http://www.blm.gov>  
(307) 352-0256 (Rock Springs)  
(307) 328-4200 (Rawlins)

**Wyoming office of State Lands &  
Investments**

(307) 777-7331 <http://slf-web.state.wy.us/>

**Wyoming Department of  
Environmental Quality  
(WDEQ)**



Cheyenne Office: (307) 777-7756  
Website: <http://deq.wyoming.gov/lqd/>

**Wyoming Department of  
Environmental Quality (WDEQ)—Land Quality  
Division (LQD)**

To protect, conserve, and enhance the quality of Wyoming's environment for the benefit of current and future generations.

**An Introduction  
to Regulations  
for Gold  
Prospecting**



**WYOMING**

**Tel: (307) 777-7756  
WDEQ—LQD**

**Thank you** for your inquiry about gold exploration (prospecting) in Wyoming. Depending upon the nature of your proposed exploration, you may or may not need any permits from the Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality (WDEQ) / Land Quality Division (LQD).

The first step is to determine whether your proposed exploration activity is “recreational”, which means *minor surface disturbances that are infrequent in nature*. The term “recreational” is very similar to the term “Casual Use” which is used by the Federal Land Management Agencies such as the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the US Forest Service (USFS).

If your proposed exploration activity is considered to be “recreational” you **will not need** to notify or obtain permits from WDEQ/LQD (see Guideline 19). However, you will need to ensure that you are adhering to the “recreational” type of activities, which are clearly defined in LQD’s Guideline 19.

If your exploration falls outside the definition of “recreational”, you **will need** to submit an application and obtain a License to Explore from WDEQ/LQD (see Guidelines 19 and 16) and, most likely, a Plan of Operations from either the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) or US Forest Service (USFS).

## **Six Steps to follow when planning gold exploration**

### **Step 1:**

- \* Determine whether your proposed exploration activities are considered “recreational” by looking through Guideline 19. If your activities are “recreational” you will not need any permits from WDEQ/LQD.
- \* If your activities are not “recreational” you will need to acquire a License to Explore (LE). Details on how to apply for a LE are provided in Guideline 16.
- \* All explorers (recreational and otherwise) should read Steps 2 – 6 below.

### **Step 2:**

- \* When exploring on Federal lands, it is imperative that you contact the appropriate land management agency. The two primary federal land management agencies in Wyoming are the BLM and the USFS. Please refer to Guideline 19, Attachment C for the contact information for the appropriate land management agency. Refer to the back of this pamphlet for important phone numbers.
- \* Any prospecting, whether recreational or otherwise, on State of Wyoming lands requires that you obtain a mining lease. Refer to the back of this pamphlet for contact information on how to contact the WY State Lands and Investments Office.

### **Step 3:**

- \* Educate yourself on mining claims. Gold is considered a locatable mineral which means it is governed and acquired through the General Mining Law of 1872, as amended (30 U.S.C. §§ 22-54 and §§ 611-615). More information on mining claims can be found here: [http://www.blm.gov/wy/st/en/programs/mineral\\_resources/Mining\\_Claims.html](http://www.blm.gov/wy/st/en/programs/mineral_resources/Mining_Claims.html).
- \* Please be aware that, in addition to following the criteria indicated by the BLM for staking and filing mining claims, a copy of the Notice of Location or Location Certificate (for the mining claim) will need to be filed with the appropriate County Clerk or Recorder’s office.

### **Step 3 continued...**

- \* *“I just want to pan for gold on the weekend for fun.”*  
OK. But don’t be a claim-jumper! If you are looking for a place to pan for gold, contact the local BLM or USFS office to learn about the casual use/recreational gold panning locations in your area of interest. The reality is that there are very few (if any) panning locations that are not already claimed. You’ll want to avoid panning on anyone’s existing claims, unless you have the claimant’s permission. Information on claim locations can be found at the local BLM field office, the County Courthouse, or the following website: <http://www.blm.gov/lr2000/>

Other resources for the recreational gold-panning enthusiast are the **Gold Prospectors Association of America (GPAA)** or **Wyoming Prospector’s Association (WPA)**. The GPAA and WPA have mining claims across the region that are available for recreational use by their members. Refer to the GPAA or WPA websites for more information: <http://www.goldprospectors.org/> and <http://www.wpagold.com/>.

*The WDEQ/LQD has no affiliation with the GPAA or WPA.*

### **Step 4:**

- \* Plan ahead. If you are required to acquire a License to Explore, plan on a three to six month process to acquire the approved License. A License to Explore is a WDEQ/LQD requirement. There is a “sister” requirement for Federal Lands called a “Plan of Operations”. Be sure you have acquired an approved Plan of Operations before commencing any non-recreational exploration activities on Federal Lands. Refer to Step 6 if needed.

### **Step 5:**

- \* During your “recreational” exploration activities, please refer to Guideline 19 every so often to verify that your activities are, indeed, within the recreational criteria. Refer to Step 6 if needed.

### **Step 6:**

- \* When in doubt, please don’t hesitate to call your local LQD Field Office :
  - District I , Cheyenne (307) 777-7756
  - District II, Lander: (307) 332-3047
  - District III, Sheridan: (307) 673-9337