

Mining for Gold and Gemstones in Pennsylvania

Prospecting for gold, gemstones, or semi-precious minerals is growing as a recreational pastime. While most panning and surface prospecting (such as pickaxing by hand) does not require a permit, some forms of prospecting in Pennsylvania may require coordination or authorization from the Department of Environmental Protection, depending upon how it is undertaken.

Excavation of land for the purpose of removing minerals requires a permit, with some exceptions. Exploratory waivers (for testing purposes) or small noncoal permits are available. Contact RA-EPMININGPERMITS@pa.gov or your local [District Mining Office](#).

For waterways, non-motorized forms of panning for gold, gems, or minerals do not require a permit. These include shoveling and using **non-motorized** pans, sieves, sluice boxes, buckets, pan- or dish-type hand classifiers, concentrators, and mini rocker boxes.

Motorized forms of panning for gold, gems, or minerals may require a permit. These include suction dredges (with a nozzle no larger than four inches in diameter), high-bankers, or suction dredge/high-banker combinations (with a water intake no larger than two and one-half inches inside diameter, and which are operated entirely below the ordinary high-water line), or any equipment mentioned above that is motorized or powered. Contact the [DEP Regional office](#) for these permits.

Prospecting on private property should only be undertaken with the permission of the landowner. Prospecting is not allowed within State Game Lands or National Parks. If you wish to prospect on State Forestland or in a State Park, please contact the [Department of Conservation and Natural Resources](#) to ensure you are familiar with their rules and regulations.