



VERMONT DEPARTMENT OF
ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION

WATERSHED
MANAGEMENT DIVISION

Six Tips on Gold Panning and Guidance for the use of Sluice Boxes

Vermont DEC Watershed Management Division - Rivers Program

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As a pastime, gold prospecting using a hand pan is non-invasive and low-impact recreational pursuit and is therefore unregulated on State lands. Aggressive gold panning practices such as dredging and streambank removal upsets stream systems and fish and wildlife habitat, ruins the experience for the next group arriving and takes the fun out of their new discovery and outdoor adventure. We want everyone to Respect - Protect – Enjoy the outdoors!

Hand panning on private land requires landowner permission, and operating a sluice box is allowed *only* on private land and requires both landowner permission and approval from the State. Information on Mineral Prospecting Permitting and an application can be found at: <http://dec.vermont.gov/watershed/rivers/river-management>. The use of suction dredges for mineral prospecting in streams are prohibited by Vermont statute on all private, commercial and state-owned lands.

The State of Vermont offers the following guidelines and recommendations for Gold Panning, and prospecting with the use of Sluice Boxes in Vermont. The Rivers Program would like to increase your enjoyment of gold prospecting as well as the enjoyment of Mother Nature by those folks arriving after you leave, and urges you to use common sense and respect the enjoyment of others who may follow you in gold prospecting, fishing, tubing, wading, hiking and watching our birds and wildlife.

1. Choose a stream that contains both fast and slow moving water, and you are responsible to determine the land ownership patterns in each location.
2. Know the property owner, have documented landowner permission on the application, and make sure the landowner is aware of when you are visiting their property and who your guests may be if you are accompanied by others, and state your intention to keep any and all gold and other minerals you may find as a result of your efforts.

The boundaries of our State Parks and Wildlife Management Areas are not always readily marked or markings may be obscured by vegetation. There are numerous “in holdings” of private and commercial lands within the boundaries of our State Parks and Wildlife Management Areas that may not have readily visible boundary markings. Do not assume that stone walls, hedge rows and tree lines represent a property boundary, or you might trespass onto someone else’s property. Be respectful if you are asked to leave someone’s property.

Respect! Protect! Enjoy!



Please be considerate of other adjoining landowner's rights and ask first for access permission to walk to your location on the brook. Respect a farmer's need to control animals and close pasture gates when you pass through a farm field.

3. As you leave your prospecting site, please fill any holes dug in pursuit of your treasure and pick up trash as you would in any other recreational pastime. Hikers and backpackers say "pack it in, pack it out". Be respectful of our environment and the future enjoyment of others by leaving no trace of your activities.
4. Remove your sluice at the end of the day and return to the stream any sediments and larger stones that were piled up during the day to maintain habitat, the natural function and appearance of the stream.
5. The digging into a streambank disrupts the stable banks of streams and brooks. The cutting of trees and shrubs and digging up roots weakens soil structure and further disrupts the stable banks of streams and brooks. These practices often lead to increased streambank erosion and can adversely impact fish and wildlife, private lands, and public infrastructure. The practice of cutting stems and roots and digging into the streambank is destructive and causes additional stream instability and erosion and results in an adverse environmental impact that is discouraged by the State of Vermont.
6. Gold flakes are heavier than sand, so look in areas of bedrock cracks and crevices with a hand-pick, below small waterfalls with rocks and in the middle of gravel bars with larger gravels sorted by stream flow processes on the inside of meander bends. A vein or streak of pay dirt with the most gold flakes can be found in the middle of gravel bars and towards the downstream end, particularly where the steeper upper stream reach becomes shallower and the gold flakes drop out. Sort the gold pan with water over the gravel bar so that the rinse water falls on the gravel bar to minimize the release of sediment so that less turbid water results.

Please contact the Rivers Program at ANR.WSMDRivers@vermont.gov or 802-490-6195 with any questions or to request an application for a Mineral Prospecting Permit.

Gold "strikes" in history are legendary and mythical and date back to the Romans, Egyptians and Phoenicians. Good luck with your pursuit of a few flakes and remember to Respect - Protect - Enjoy the outdoors!

Respect! Protect! Enjoy!