

NEW MEXICO PUBLIC LANDS **Responsible Rockhound** **Guide**

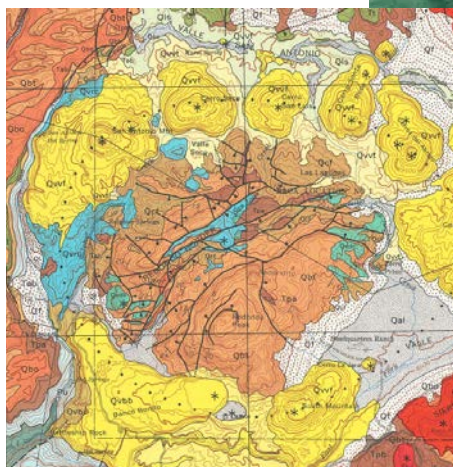


*Regulations and resources to get you
digging, panning, claiming, and
collecting without a hassle.*

NEW MEXICO'S MINERAL RICHES

New Mexico's minerals have sparked interest for millennia, from evidence of turquoise mining at present-day Cerrillos to obsidian collected from the slopes of the volcanic Jemez Mountains. Today, rockhounding on New Mexico's public lands is a common hobby, with areas like **Rockhound State Park near Deming** specially designated for that purpose.

This guide is adapted from the published general guidance available from land management agencies. Please contact them directly to confirm rules for specific areas.



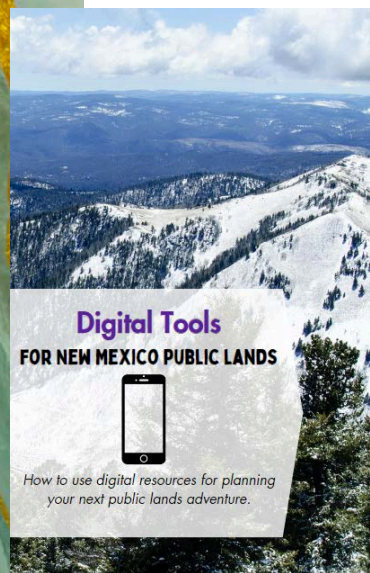
Detail of Geologic Map of the Jemez Mountains via US Geological Survey

STAY ON PUBLIC LANDS

Before venturing out into New Mexico's public lands, take time to prepare and do as much research as possible. Especially when it comes to collection of minerals, it is vital to know you are on public land and not trespassing into private or restricted areas.

There are a variety of maps and digital resources that can help you with this step. **Visit the PLIA website or refer to our other Mobile Visitor Center publications for help finding these.**

When rockhounding, especially in New Mexico, it is vital to never interfere with any historical objects you may find. Anything that may be of historical value should be left in place. There are harsh penalties for taking artifacts from public lands and the context they are found in is of great value to archeologists and the descendants of indigenous cultures who left many of these physical objects.



WHERE AND WHAT CAN BE COLLECTED

General Guidelines on Federal Land

For both the Bureau of Land Management and US Forest Service, collection of rocks and minerals for personal, hobby, and noncommercial use is allowed. If collecting from the surface, without the use of tools, for more common minerals, such as agate, quartz, or obsidian, you are allowed to collect up to 10 pounds. Those interested in collecting specimens for commercial or retail use, will need to inquire about obtaining a permit from the appropriate agency/office.



Bureau of Land Management (BLM)

The main differentiation when it comes to rock hounding on BLM's public lands is to check ahead of time if there is an existing mining claim in place. There is more information about this on page 4. In addition, BLM allows hobby collecting of rock and mineral specimens in wilderness and wilderness study areas, and permits the use of hand tools.

US Forest Service (USFS)

In contrast to the BLM general guidelines, USFS does not permit the disturbance or collection of rock and mineral specimens in wilderness areas and no hand tools are permitted.

What is not allowed?

Any historically or archeologically significant artifacts. This includes pottery, projectile points (arrowheads), prehistoric tools, vertebrate fossils, shark teeth, and material remains of historic human life. The BLM has a helpful website called "Can I Keep This?" that covers more of the basics for collection on public lands. Visit their website at [blm.gov/Learn/Can-I-Keep-This](https://www.blm.gov/Learn/Can-I-Keep-This)

GOLD PANNING

You are generally allowed to prospect for and collect small amounts of gold on federally managed public lands. It is the responsibility of the prospector/collector to check for any existing mining claims on public land. If gold panning in waterways, the BLM places a limit on suction dredges at no larger than 4 inches.



To find out more about panning for gold in rivers within National Forests or BLM land, please contact the regional office to check for any restrictions that may be in place

METAL DETECTING

In general, metal detecting is allowed on federally managed public lands, as long as it is not a historical or archeological site. It is the responsibility of the person using a metal detector to be aware of any relics that are considered culturally, historically, or archeologically significant and to not remove them from the land. This includes items 50 years or older, such as coins, utensils, or metal implements.



For best practices and to avoid any legalities, check with the local agency office to be sure you will not be using a metal detector on any sites considered culturally, historically, or archeologically significant

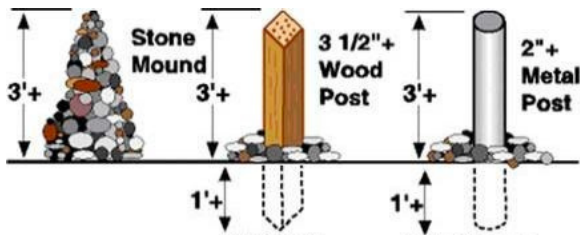
MINING CLAIMS AND PERMITS

Mining Claims

The Bureau of Land Management allows individuals to obtain mining claims for parcels of land where locatable minerals may be found. Whether you want to pursue a potential claim for yourself, or be sure you are not going to be hobby collecting on land where a mining claim is in place, please visit the BLM's Mineral and Land Record System (MLRS). The website can be found at

blm.gov/services/land-records/mlrs

Another consideration to have in mind, especially when rockhounding on BLM land, is to be aware of what the markings look like for the boundaries of a staked claim. These are most often in the form of a wood or metal post, or a stone mound.



Examples of staked claims from the BLM's website

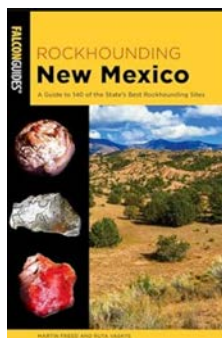
Permits

If you decide you would like to take your rockhounding hobby further and pursue collecting on a larger scale, you will need to inquire about obtaining a permit from either the Bureau of Land Management or National Forest overseeing the area in which you wish to collect. Reasons to obtain a permit would include re-sale of mineral or fossil specimens, any activity involving mechanized equipment, or removal of rocks over the generally allowed 10 lb limit, such as in the case of larger quantities for landscaping purposes. Please refer to our other booklet, **Public Lands Directory**, for contact information to all of the federal land management offices in New Mexico.

GETTING STARTED WITH ROCKHOOUNDING

There are plenty of resources out there for those who want to start out with rockhounding on public lands. One of the first points of contact for the absolute beginner should be a local rockhound club. These organizations can provide resources, guidance, and experience, often offering outings to their members to join in on collecting.

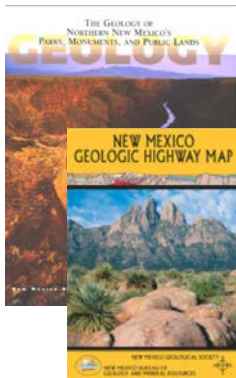
Albuquerque Gem & Mineral Club	agmc.info
Carlsbad Gem & Mineral Society	carlsbadgms.org
Deming Gem & Mineral Society	thedgmsclub.com
Grant County Rolling Stones Gem & Mineral Society	rollingstonesgms.blogspot.com
San Juan County Gem & Mineral Society	sjcgemandmineralnm.com
Sierra County Rock & Gem Society	scrags.org



There are many guides for rockhounding that are specific to New Mexico. **Rockhounding New Mexico** from FalconGuides is a good resource for starting out and finding spots that are legal to collect from, including detailed directions. Be careful to choose guides that are current and provide contacts to the agencies that manage these lands.

NM Bureau of Geology and Mineral Resources

The best hub for navigating mineral collection on public lands is the **New Mexico Bureau of Geology and Mineral Resources**, based out of New Mexico Tech in Socorro. This research agency is responsible for surveying New Mexico's geology and has an abundance of free resources on rockhounding.



They also publish a wide variety of books like ***The Geology of Northern/Southern New Mexico's Parks, Monuments, and Public Lands.***

This pair of books are a fantastic guide to practical geology you can see in action on public lands. The ***New Mexico Geologic Highway Map*** is a concise yet thorough overview of the state's geology and mineral resources. They have countless other publications covering New Mexico's minerals in great detail.

The mineral museum on the New Mexico Tech campus is well worth a visit and can give you a crash course on the various types of minerals found in New Mexico's diverse landscapes.



We highly recommend visiting their website at geoinfo.nmt.edu to start browsing their free resources, including field guides and free collections of articles about known collection sites throughout the state.



The NM Mobile Visitor Center is a program of the Public Lands Interpretive Association, a 501(c)3 nonprofit dedicated to inspiring and educating the public about America's public land resources.



publiclands.org/pages/new-mexico-mobile-visitor-center

Visit our website for more Mobile Visitor Center resources featuring digital downloads of our publications including:

- NM Dispersed Camping Guide**
- NM Responsible Rockhound Guide**
- NM Public Lands Directory**
- NM Public Lands FAQs**
- Digital Tools for NM Public Lands**

*La Ventana Arch,
El Malpais National
Conservation Area*

**This guide from the Public Lands
Interpretive Association was made
possible thanks to support from the
NM Outdoor Recreation Division.**

