

# ROCK HOUNDING

On Public Land  
In Western Montana



Missoula Field Office



Public Lands USA:  
Use, Share, Appreciate

# ROCK HOUNDING

is one of the recreational opportunities on lands managed by the BLM in western Montana. Rock hounds collect small quantities of rocks of different kinds for cutting and polishing, or for mineral specimens. There is no charge for collecting small, non-commercial quantities of rock as a hobby, but gathering or collecting rocks to sell or barter is prohibited unless specifically authorized.

Most BLM lands are open to rock hounding, but there are some exceptions. Some lands withdrawn or reserved for specific other purposes are off limits to rock hounding. These include outstanding natural areas, areas of critical environmental concern, recreation sites, national historic sites, and so on. Rock hounding on recorded mining claims is not advised without the mining claimant's consent because of legal problems that might arise between the claimant and the collector.

Maps showing the location of public lands can be purchased at nominal fees from the BLM office at 3255 Fort Missoula Road, Missoula, Montana 59804.

## Collection Methods

Rock hounds are allowed to collect rocks found on the ground or beneath of the surface if the excavation is done by hand. Excavating with explosives or mechanical equipment is not allowed. Special caution should be taken when digging. Do not undercut banks or leave a deep vertical-walled hole because of a possible cave in. All holes must be filled.

## Historic Artifacts and Fossils

Federal and State laws prohibit the excavation, collection, or destruction of any human remains or any artifacts, ancient and historical on lands under federal jurisdiction. These include arrowheads and flakes, pottery and potshards, mats, rock art, old bottles, and pieces of equipment or buildings. Any human remains should be left intact and reported to federal and state authorities. Vertebrate and other fossils of “recognized scientific interest” also are protected by laws. Paleontologists believe that the removal of just one such fossil could create an unfortunate gap in scientific inquiry.

## Antiquities Permits

Federal law also requires permits for collecting any artifacts, certain fossils or

other objects protected by the Act. Permits are granted only to qualified institutions for bonafide scientific research. Permits are not issued to casual recreational collectors even though they may have an interest in archeology.

## Reporting Historic Sites

Historic sites, such as cabins, prehistoric campsites, buffalo jumps, fossil beds, etc., should be reported to the nearest BLM office. They will then be evaluated by cultural resource specialists.

## For More Information

Specific information on western Montana geology and the distribution of various minerals is available from geologists at BLM field offices in Missoula and Butte, the Montana Department of State Lands in Helena, the U.S. Forest Service in Missoula, the Montana Bureau of Mines and Geology in Butte, or from local universities.

Local rock shops are also an excellent resource for collectors. The "*Rock Hound's Guide to Montana*" has a listing of the shops, as well as other useful information.

Following is a partial list of books dealing with gems and geology of the area.

Alt, David, and Hyndman, Donald W., *Roadside Geology of the Northern Rockies*, Missoula, Montana; Mountain Press Publishing Co., 1972, 104 pp.

Feldman, Robert, *The Rock Hound's Guide to Montana*, Helena, Montana; Falcon Press, 1985, 156 pp.

Perry, E.S., *Montana in the Geologic Past*, Montana Bureau of Mines and Geology Bulletin 26, 1962.

Renfro, H.B. and Feray D.E., *Geologic Highway Map of the Northern Rocky Mountain Region* (Map No. 5), Tulsa, Oklahoma; American Association of Petroleum Geologists, 1962.

Wolle, M.S., *Montana Pay Dirt: A Guide to the Mining Camps of the Treasure State*, Denver, Colorado, Sage Books, 1963, 436 pp.

## Harmonious Resource Use

One of the BLM's objectives is to promote harmony in balancing the many uses of the federal lands. As a rock hound, you have room to roam in enjoying your hobby, but you are expected to respect all natural resources and the interests others also have in them.

# Specific Fossils and Minerals Available

This is a listing of specific fossils and minerals and general areas where they may be found. However, many of these areas have unpatented or private mining claims or private property on or near them. Always ask permission before crossing or entering private property.

Pyrolusite	Philipsburg area, north and east of town
Manganese	Philipsburg area, north and east of town
Rhodochrosite	Philipsburg area, north and east of town.
Gryphaea (Mollosk)	4 to 5 miles west of Drummond in road and railroad cuts
Calcite crystals	Rattler and Spring Gulch area, 4 to 5 miles northwest of Drummond
Garnets	Garnet Ghost Town area; stop at the Visitor's Center for further instruction
Galena, pyrite, chalcopryite, etc.	Mine dumps around the Clinton/Wallace and Copper Cliff mining districts.