

Gold nuggets found in the vicinity of Baker City, Oregon. Largest nugget is the famous Armstrong nugget, weighing 80.4 ounces. These nuggets are part of a large collection of gold on display in the lobby of the Baker City Branch, U.S. Bank. Photo courtesy of U.S. Bank.

### GOLDEN RULES FOR RECREATIONAL GOLD PANNERS

- If you are unsure about land status, check with the nearest appropriate State, BLM, or USFS authorities.
- If you open a gate, close it.
- If you must cross private land, get permission.
- If you make trash, take it home.
- If you drive, stay on open roads and ways.
- If it is growing, let it grow.
- If it is public land, use, share, and appreciate it.
- If it has obvious historic or scientific value, don't disturb it.
- If you light a fire, control it.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This brochure was prepared by the Oregon Department of Geology and Mineral Industries (DOGAMI), 910 State Office Building, Portland, OR 97201, phone (503) 229-5580. For more information on recreational gold panning or other aspects of geology, contact the above office; DOGAMI's field offices in Baker City, phone (503) 523-3133, and Grants Pass, phone (503) 476-2496; or the nearest USFS or BLM office. DOGAMI also sells a publication entitled *Gold and Silver in Oregon* (Bulletin 61, 1968, paperbound, 337 p., \$17.50), which gives detailed information on gold mines in Oregon.



**Oregon. Things look different here.**

# Oregon's Heritage: RECREATIONAL GOLD PANNING



Oregon's Heritage Brochure 2

## HOW TO PAN FOR GOLD

Because gold is heavier than most sediments and gravel in a stream, it and other heavy minerals called “black sands” (including pyrite, magnetite, ilmenite, chromite, and garnet) can be collected in a gold pan when the right panning techniques are used.

First, get a gold pan from a hardware or department store or a store that specializes in mining equipment. Gold pans are flat bottomed, usually about 2 or 3 inches deep, with the sides sloping at an angle of about 45°, and should be at least 15 inches in diameter.

Take your pan to a likely-looking location along a stream in a known gold-bearing area. You are looking for a gold trap – a place along the stream where the current slows down enough for the gold to settle out. Good possibilities are the insides of curves of streams (called point bars), areas where streams have overflowed, and on the downstream sides of boulders or other obstructions in the water. Once you find a good place, follow these steps to pan for gold:



**1** Fill the pan between about half and two-thirds full of soil, gravel, and small rocks from the stream bank or stream channel.



**2** Put the pan under water, break up lumps of clay, and discard the stones.



**3** Still holding it level under water with your hands on opposite sides of the pan, rotate it halfway back and forth rapidly to wash out the clay and concentrate the heavy material at the bottom of the pan.

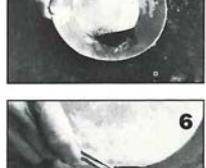


**4** Still holding the pan under water, tilt the pan forward, away from your body, and down slightly. Rotate and shake it to let the light gravel and sand dribble out the front. Push top material and large chunks of rock out with your thumbs.

Repeat steps 3-4 several times until a deposit of fine-grained dark material overlain by a smaller layer of light material remains at the bottom of the pan.



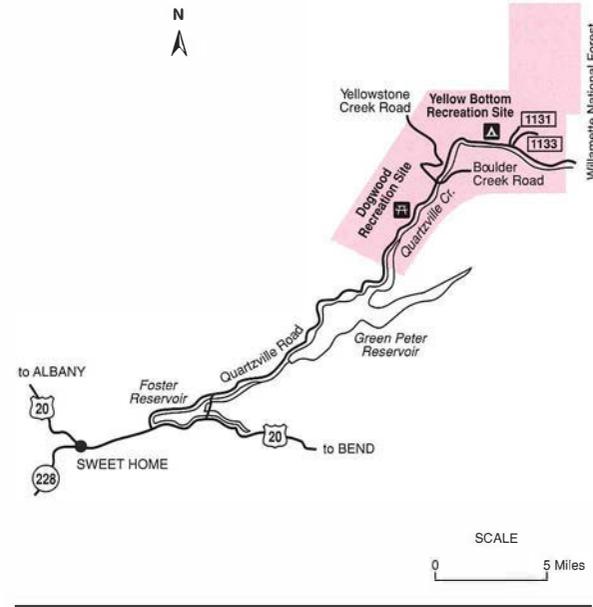
**5** Take the pan with the residue and some water out of the stream. Rotate the pan in a circular motion, and watch carefully what is happening. The water is separating lighter from heavier material – and gold, if it is present and you are doing the panning properly, is lagging behind the other material at the bottom of the pan.



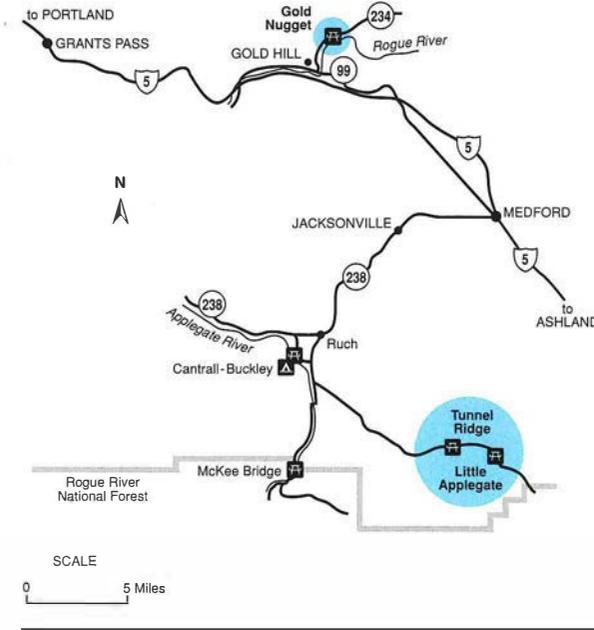
**6** Stop the rotation. If you are lucky, you will see a few flecks of gold in the dark material that remains in the bottom of the pan. Carefully drain out water and let the black sand and gold dry. Lift out most of the black sand with a magnet, and separate the gold from the remainder of the sediments with tweezers.



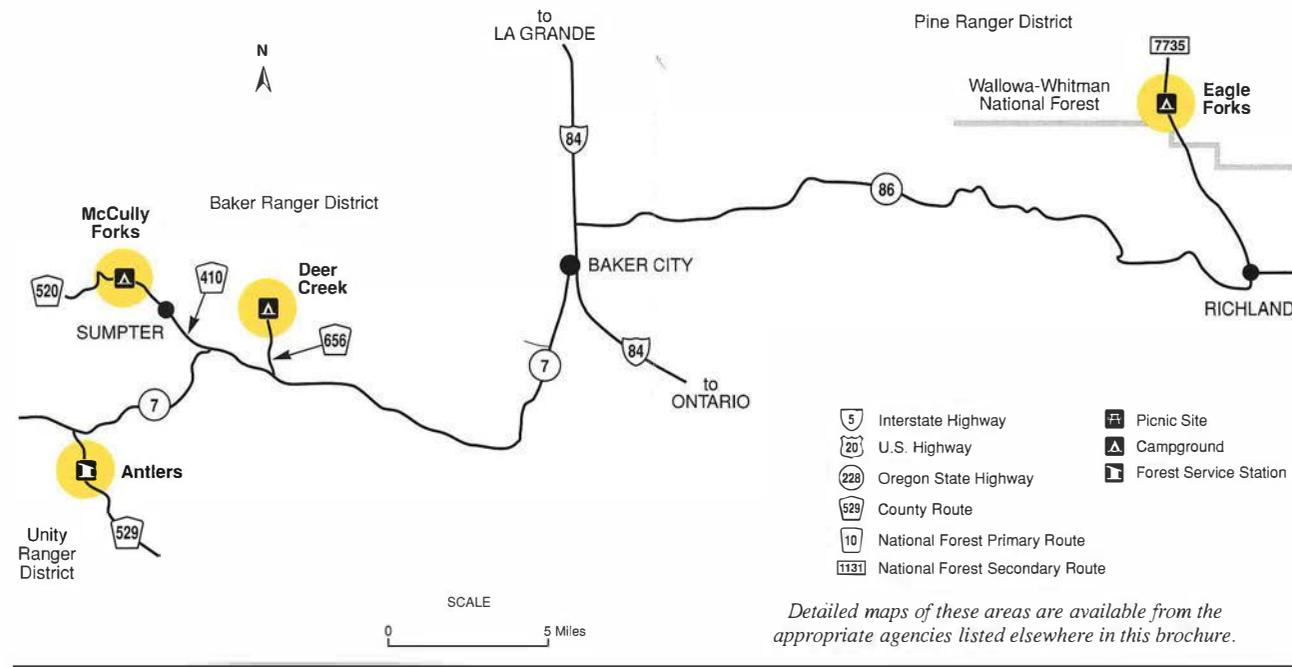
## Area 1: Quartzville Recreational Corridor



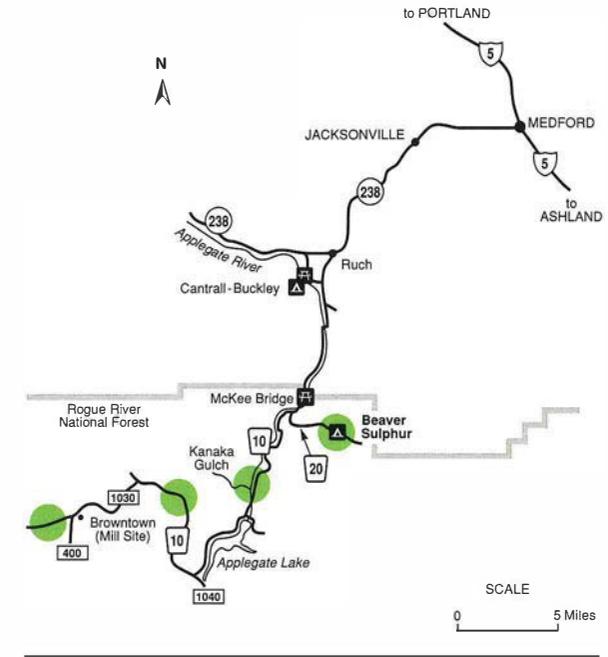
## Area 2: Butte Falls Recreational Area



## Area 4: Wallowa-Whitman National Forest



## Area 3: Applegate Ranger District



## ALL THAT GLITTERS IS NOT GOLD

All the shiny gold-colored material in your gold pan may not be gold. Pyrite, known as “fools gold,” has fooled many before you. On close examination, however, pyrite does not really look like gold. Pyrite has a brassy color, is sometimes tarnished, and, because it occurs as crystals, changes shades as you rotate it in the sun. Gold is always gold colored, soft, and malleable or bendable.

If you see gold-colored flecks that either float on the water or are so light in weight that they easily wash out of the pan, you probably have small pieces or “books” of mica, a mineral that because it is transparent and heat resistant was once used in doors of stoves so the fire could be seen. Mica has a tendency to break apart into flat sheets. It comes in several colors, and the gold-colored variety is sometimes mistaken for gold by inexperienced gold panners.

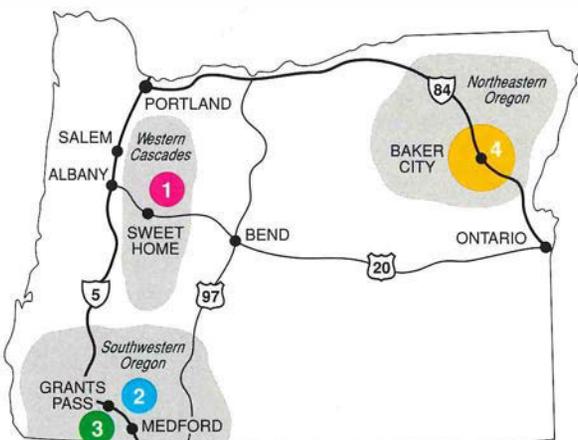
If you are lucky enough to find gold in your pan, it can come in many shapes: small lumps or nuggets, wires, feather-shaped crystals, or flat flecks. Pieces can range in size from almost microscopic “colors” (very small pieces) up to fist-sized nuggets, but your chances of finding the latter are pretty remote. However, gold panners are optimistic, and you never know what the next pan will produce.

## WHERE TO PAN FOR GOLD IN OREGON

To find gold, you should go where gold has been found before – in northeast Oregon, southwest Oregon, and the Western Cascades (see map). These areas have many streams and rivers that can be successfully panned for gold.

### FEDERAL LANDS

Mining claims on Federal land are not open for gold panning unless permission has been granted by the owner. However, four areas have been set aside on Federal land in Oregon for recreational gold panning (see map):



#### Area 1. Quartzville Recreational Corridor:

Located in the Western Cascades, Salem District, Bureau of Land Management (free site). The Salem District Office address is 1717 Fabry Road SE, Salem, OR 97306, phone (503) 399-5646.

#### Area 2. Butte Falls Recreational Area:

Located in southwestern Oregon, Medford District, Bureau of Land Management (free site). The Medford District Office address is 3040 Biddle Road, Medford, OR 97504, phone (503) 770-2200.

#### Area 3. Applegate Ranger District:

Located in southwestern Oregon, Rogue River National Forest (four fee sites where there is a charge of a dollar a day for panning in areas adjacent to campgrounds). The Applegate Ranger District address is 6941 Upper Applegate Road, Jacksonville, OR 97530, phone (503) 899-1812.

#### Area 4. Wallowa-Whitman National Forest:

Located in northeastern Oregon (free sites). The Forest Supervisor is located at P.O. Box 907, Baker City, OR 97814, phone (503) 523-6391. Areas set aside for recreational gold mining in the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest are listed below:

- a. **Eagle Forks Campground**, 9 mi northwest of Richland, T. 8 S., R. 44 E., Pine Ranger District, Halfway, OR 97834, phone (503) 742-7511.
- b. **McCully Forks Campground**, on McCully Forks Creek just west of Sumpter, T. 9 S., R. 36 E.; Deer Creek Campground, on Deer Creek north of Phillips Lake, T. 9 S., R. 38 E.; and Powder River Recreational Area, on the Powder River just below Mason Dam, T. 10 S., R. 39 E.; all located in the Baker Ranger District, Baker City, OR 97814, phone (503) 523-4476.
- c. **Antlers Guard Station**, on the Burnt River, T. 11 S., R. 36 E., Unity Ranger District, Unity, OR 97884, phone (503) 446-3351.

In addition, gold panning is permitted on nearly all streams and rivers running through campgrounds on Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and USDA Forest Service (USFS) land in Oregon. Maps showing locations of campgrounds may be obtained from local BLM and USFS offices; from the USFS Recreation Information Office, 319 SW Pine, Portland, OR 97204, phone (503) 326-2877; or from the BLM Oregon State Office, P.O. Box 2965, 1300 NE 44th Ave., Portland, OR 97208, phone (503) 280-7001.

### STATE LANDS

In Oregon, areas below the vegetation line on navigable rivers and streams and ocean beaches belong to the State of Oregon and are therefore open for recreational gold panning.