

# The Prospector

Portland Gold Prospectors, Inc.

GPAA Portland, Oregon Chapter



August, 2020

## Potato Patch Gold Nuggets



Washington State is not all that well-known for producing large gold nuggets. In fact, compared to nearly all of the western states in the U.S. it is probably the poorest state to try and find large gold nuggets (although there are plenty of places where smaller placer gold is commonly found.)

However, there is one place in Washington that has a history of producing some spectacular gold nuggets over the years, and that is in the mining town of Liberty.

Located north of Ellensburg, the richest gold bearing areas around Liberty were found in Swauk and Williams Creeks. The earliest discoveries here were made back in 1873, and unlike most other areas that only produced fine gold dust and flakes, large nuggets were readily found in the Swauk district.

Most of the placer deposits were exhausted long ago, but not all.

In the fall of 2013, some miners were prospecting the bedrock of an ancient river channel in Liberty on Corbley's Potato Patch

claim. A prospector was swinging a metal detector over the bedrock and was having some success finding some smaller gold nuggets earlier in the day. Heavy equipment was used to remove much dirt and overburden, exposing the bedrock and allowing for the prospector to use his detector overtop the bedrock.

They had been mining this area for many years, and certainly some nice gold nuggets had been found here before. Several multi-ounce nuggets had been found on his claim over the years, including one over 5-ounces a few years back.

However, what they discovered was beyond anyone's wildest imagination.

The metal detector gave off a booming signal, indicating a large piece of iron rubbish. This is the sort of thing that is commonly found in mining country, and not unusual to find rusty junk with a metal detector. What was unusual is finding it in such deep ground that had just recently been exposed.



What they expected to be iron soon turned into something much different.

What the prospector had found was a 16.25 troy ounce gold nugget, smooth and rounded just like a golden potato! And if that wasn't exciting enough, just a few feet away another 13-ouncer was unearthed!

Both nuggets were smooth and iron stained, indicating that at one time they had been at the bottom of a river. Likely for millions of years, they tumbled around on the bedrock, producing their smooth and rounded shapes. At some point, the river channel changed positions, cut down, and somehow left an ancient river channel "high and dry." These two spectacular nuggets remained there for millions of years, until their discovery.

Any gold miner would truly consider these beauties the find of a lifetime! Are there still big gold nuggets out there waiting to be found?

You bet!

*Reprinted from GoldRushNuggets.com*



## PRESIDENT'S BLOG AUGUST, 2020

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-----NO CHAPTER MEETING IN AUGUST, 2020-----

Dear Fellow Prospectors -

I hope all of you are staying safe and doing well.

Upon talking to Jerry Johns, I am glad to hear that good gold was found at TYROY and there was a good turnout, including some new people, which is great!

Unfortunately, we are not in a position to have a meeting this month and, quite frankly, might not hold any meetings the rest of the year. We are working on some possible options so we can have a meeting, but we are also still dealing with the unpredictable and difficult challenges of Covid-19, and its ongoing ramifications.

That being said, we might try to organize a meeting or meetings for October or November, if the virus slows down enough, instead increasing like it is now.

Lastly, Bill Bench called me on August 9th to let me know that someone is using my name to request money from people.

Please be aware that this is NOT me!

Hopefully some semblance of "normal" returns soon! ☺

Thank you. Stay safe!

*Mike*

Mike Lewis, President  
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THE WELCOME STRANGER NUGGET



# 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:



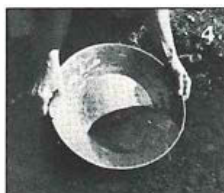
**1** Fill the pan between about half and two-thirds full of soil, gravel, and small rocks from the stream bank or stream channel.



**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.

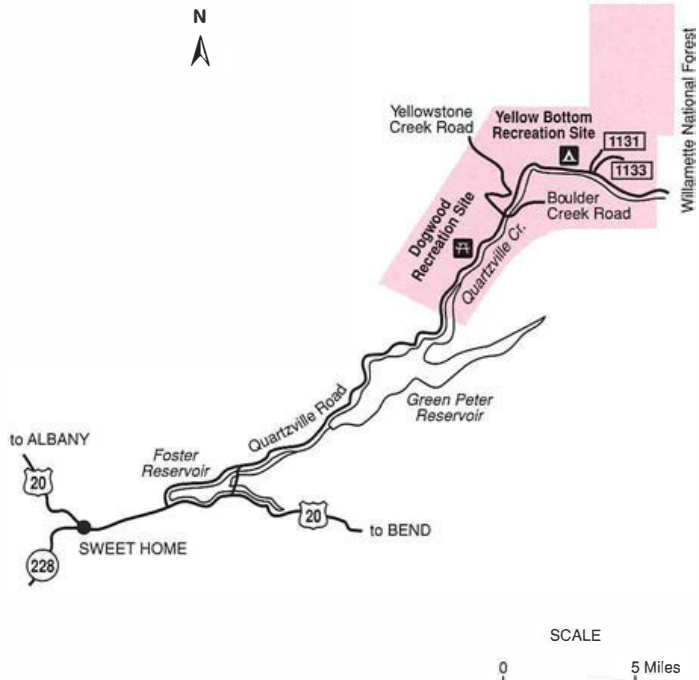


**5** Take the pan with the residue and some water out of the stream. Rotate the pan in a circular motion, and watch carefully what is happening. The water is separating lighter from heavier material – and gold, if it is present and you are doing the panning properly, is lagging behind the other material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

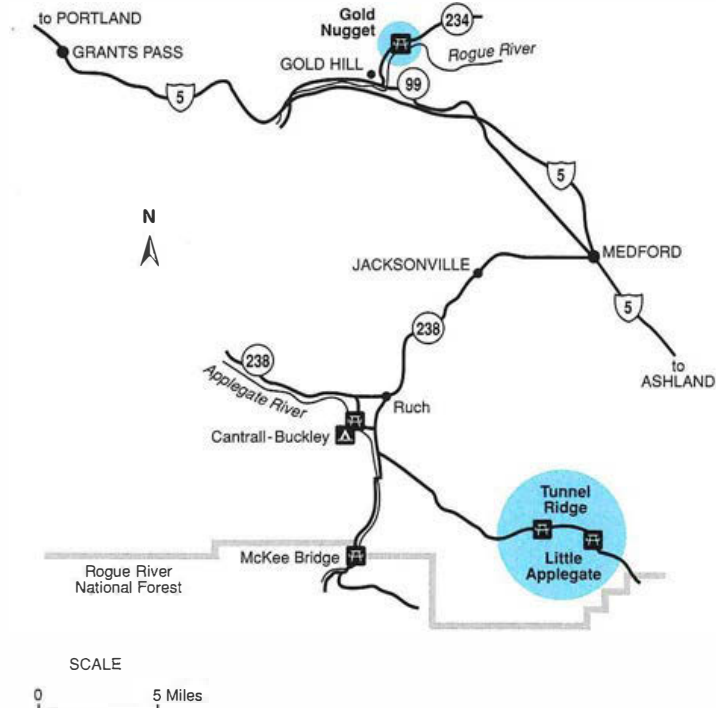
**6** Stop the rotation. If you are lucky, you will see a few flecks of gold in the dark material that remains in the bottom of the pan. Carefully drain out water and let the black sand and gold dry. Lift out most of the black sand with a magnet, and separate the gold from the remainder of the sediments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



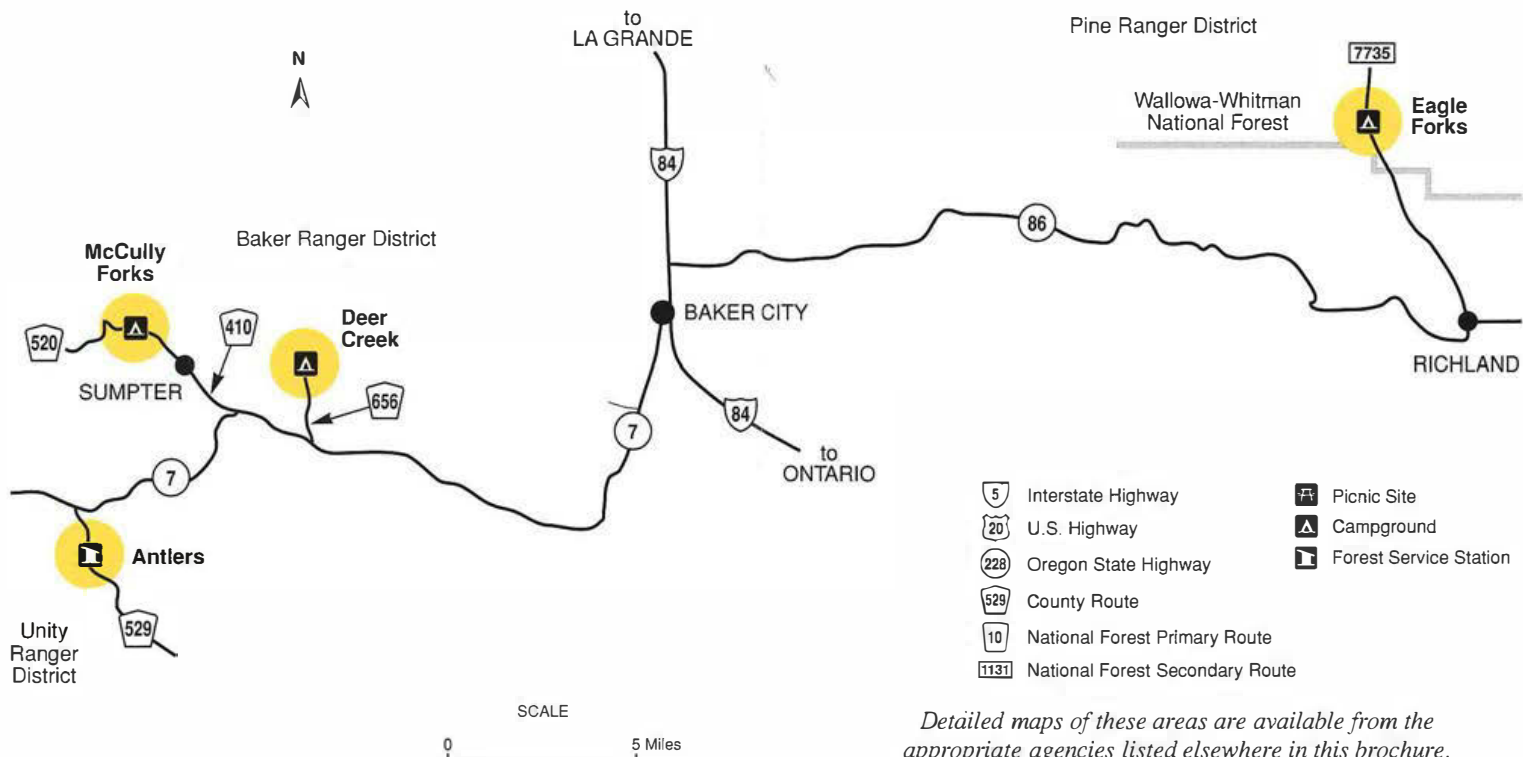
## Area 1: Quartzville Recreational Corridor



## Area 2: Butte Falls Recreational Area



## Area 4: Wallowa-Whitman National Forest

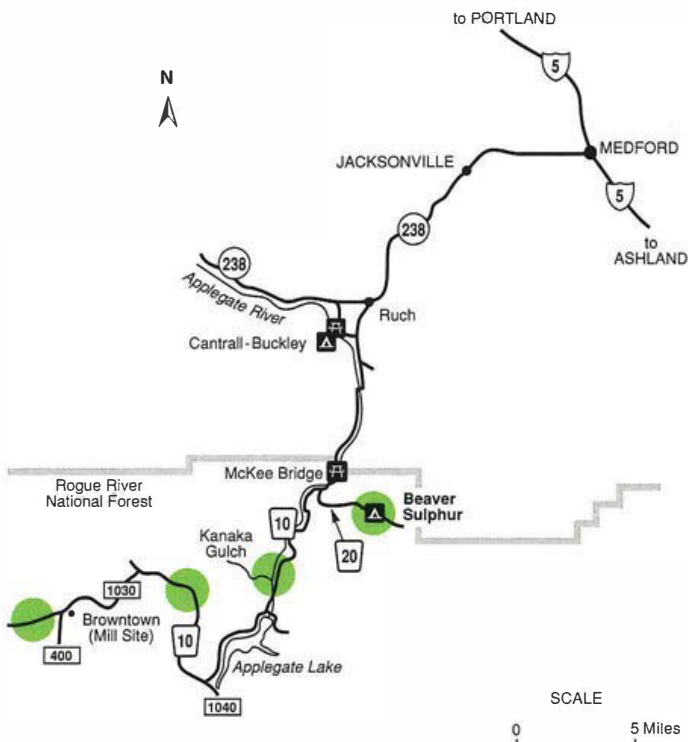


Detailed maps of these areas are available from the appropriate agencies listed elsewhere in this brochure.





## Area 3: Applegate Ranger District



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.

Documents prepared by the State are deemed to be in the public domain.

Reprints of this pamphlet can be found here:

<https://www.oregongeology.org/.../OregonsHeritageRecreationalGoldPanning.pdf>

## 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.

The new **Washington Gold and Fish** pamphlet is now available. You must have it with you whenever you prospect in the state of Washington.

Download a copy to print here: <https://wdfw.wa.gov/licenses/environmental/hpa/types/prospecting>



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