



Minerals Exploration Locations

Exploration is the activity performed to locate mineral bodies and to determine their mineability and merchantability [Idaho Code § 47-1503(8)]. All state lands, endowment lands and navigable waters, are open for casual exploration unless they have been withdrawn [Idaho Code § 47-702(1)].

Exploration locations on state-owned lands are issued to allow a prospector the exclusive right for mineral exploration on a specific tract. Most state endowment lands and navigable waterways are open to exploration locations. All exploration locations have a two-year term. Land locations are limited to twenty acres and cost \$100. Riverbed locations on navigable waters are limited to ½ mile of river and cost \$250. All fees are nonrefundable.

One hundred dollars worth of work must be done on each location annually. Exploration is the only mining activity allowed. The locator must apply for a mineral lease if he believes a mineral deposit is present and wants to develop a mining proposal for the site. Spouses or immediate family members may not file a subsequent exploration location on the same tract if the original holder is still conducting the exploration.

Commercial quantities of any ores, minerals or deposits may not be removed from state lands before securing a lease from the state [Idaho Code § 47-717]. Royalty must be paid on all minerals removed from the location.

Please contact the appropriate Area office if you are interested in exploring for minerals on state lands. A legal description down to the ¼-¼ Section, or government lot, and a proposal for exploration will be needed prior to meeting with Area staff. The Area office can supply the forms needed for application and maintenance of an exploration location.

The Idaho Department of Lands may deny applications for exploration locations if the proposed activities do not constitute exploration or if the Department determines that an exploration location is not an acceptable use of that state land. For example, recreational mining on endowment lands should be conducted under a lease and not an exploration location. Also, mining may not be the highest and best use of a particular tract of state land. Endowment lands must be managed to maximize the long term financial return to public schools and other beneficiaries. Navigable waters must be managed to protect the public trust values of navigation, wildlife, fisheries, recreation, etc.