

New Government Permit requirements

By Doug True

I guess some of these rules and requirements have been in place for some time, but to me it was an awakening. I called the BLM office in Rock Springs, Wyoming to see if they had a Geologist on staff that could give a talk on the Geology of Blue Forest. I was asked if we had a permit for the fieldtrip. My response was WHAT PERMIT?? We were just going to an area that was set aside for rock hounds. Response No, All organized trips 2 or more are required to have a permit to collect.

This process can take up to 180 days, we had to fill out application forms, give the government a certificate of insurance, topographical maps showing the areas that we wanted to dig for petrified. Plus a description and a plan for the trip, camp locations etc. This permit application would be reviewed by a number of departments, i.e. Archeology, Environmental, Geology and others. If any of these departments don't approve of the location, no trip.

One of the 3 locations were approved, the others we were told that Archeological surveys had not been done and if we wanted to pay for them. The permit would be issued. (I think \$12,000 was the figure quoted)

I am going to assume the rules throughout the BLM are the same with a local touch added. The attitude of the Recreation Officer and how they interpret the rules and what their attitudes are toward the public using our public lands.

It seems the attitude in the Billings, Montana office is more intense, and permits will be harder to obtain, because there is it's mine and you can't go on it attitude. I will be setting down with the powers to be in a month or so and see what we have to do to get fieldtrips in our district.

The South Central Oregon district is a different story, because of the foresight of early rock hounds and the Prineville Chamber of Commerce and some planning, the USF Service and the BLM developed a number of collecting areas and set them aside for collecting, printed a map for collectors also. We still have to go through the permit process, but with these areas having had impact studies completed, the process will go smoother. The attitude toward rock hounds in this district is very different, they look at us as our land, want to help us.

I think the key to this is getting to know our district directors, build a relationship, and work with them. If they do not want to be a part of the team, then and only then do you go up the ladder or to your congressman. It is important that all districts are on the same page and personnel know the rules. We need to work at keeping our public lands open for all uses.