

NFMS News Article - SADDLE MOUNTAIN (Mattawa, WA) COLLECTING SITE

As many of you know Saddle Mountain has been visited for years by rock hounds to collect petrified wood. An article was just published about collecting there in the May issue of Rock and Gem. That site has now come under some restraints.

The weekend of April 20-22, 2007 there was a POW WOW field trip, as well as some other rockhounds, digging for petrified/opalized wood at Saddle Mountain. Some of the members had a 'run in' with a Nathan Maughan. There were crudely made signs posted in various places stating "No Digging".

During this last week contact was made with the BLM concerning this.

Specifically, Mr. Brent Cunderla, the BLM geologist, informed me that there was a legal problem with some of the Sections at Saddle Mountain.

The BLM owns several sections in the Saddle Mountains. Some of these sections were acquired in the 1990s and the mineral rights were not transferred to the BLM for T15N, R23E, Sections 11 and 13 and T15N, R24E, Section 7. Gary Maughan acquired the mineral estate from Glacier Park, a subsidiary of Burlington Northern Railroad. There is some ambiguity regarding the rights to "rocks of unique character" on these sections. Until this legal question is settled, the BLM is unable to clearly authorize public collection of petrified wood on these lands. Some members of the Hells Canyon Club had a good discussion with Nathan Maughan at Saddle Mountain. Rocky McCall, Marysville Club suggested we "keep the Maughans in the loop," so Nathan Maughan was contacted. He has met with the BLM and they are going to redo the map at the kiosk and print up a number of official signs to be placed around the properties.

There is a ['topo/T&R' map](#) you can go on line and get a map, this map, along with the new BLM postings, should help everyone to define where the three Sections are located in regard to the road(s) and the terrain. If there are questions people may contact Nathan Maughan at Nathan@thequarry.net or phone 509 932-4712, or phone his father Gary Maughan 509-932-4050. Also, contact me at obmcarthur@cpcinternet.com.

Although all surface area belongs to the BLM and wood can be legally collected from the surface without digging in those Sections, it might be prudent not to do so under the circumstances.

The Maughans think they can sell the wood on their mineral claim for a dollar a pound to the rockhounds. If those Sections have opalized wood, it might be worth that amount.

The BLM is in the process of trying to legally straighten out the situation. However, a Judge has already ruled in favor of the Maughans to wit, 'Petrified wood is a mineral and therefore the wood belongs to the Maughans as they legally have the mineral rights. So, it may be some time before a final ruling is made in favor of rockhounds.

This is certainly a unique situation, but one we can live with as there is still plenty of area in which to dig without being in these specific three Sections.

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