How to Stake and File a Mining Claim in Alaska

Alaska has two kinds of mining claims, and who owns the land decides which one you stake. On federal land, run by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) or the Forest Service, you stake a federal claim: post a notice at the northeast corner, mark the corners, then record a certificate with the state recording district and file with BLM, both within 90 days. A new lode claim costs $274 in BLM fees, plus $20 or more to record. On state land, you stake a state claim under the Alaska Department of Natural Resources (DNR). It has to be recorded within 45 days, with $40 or more in first rent paid in the same 45 days, and nothing goes to BLM.

Much of Alaska's gold ground is state land. Many of the closed federal claims on our Alaska maps now sit on state land, and our maps don't show state claims, so find out whose land it is before anything else. Both kinds of claim need a yearly paper recorded by November 29, and a state claim also owes yearly rent by then.

Last checked November 10, 2026. This is a plain-words summary of Alaska and federal law, not legal advice. Fees and rules change, so confirm dates and costs with the recorder's office, DNR or BLM before you rely on them. The newest version of our Alaska staking guide is at goldmapsonline.com/how-to-stake-a-mining-claim-in-alaska.html. Check it before you file, since fees and rules can change after you download your maps.

The steps at a glance

Federal land	Where	Deadline	Cost
1. Post your notice	Northeast corner	This starts the clock	No fee
2. Mark the corners	On the claim	Before you record	Your posts or stones
3. Record the certificate	State recording district	90 days after posting	$20 first page, $5 each added page
4. File with BLM	Online in MLRS, or BLM in Anchorage or Fairbanks	90 days after posting	$274 for a lode claim
Keep it each year	BLM	September 1	$200 per lode claim or per 20 acres of placer
Record each year	State recording district	November 29	$20 first page, $5 each added page

State land	Where	Deadline	Cost
1. Post your notice and mark the corners	Notice on the northeast corner	This starts the clock	Your posts or stones
2. Record the certificate	State recording district	45 days after posting	$20 first page, $5 each added page
3. Pay the first rent	DNR	45 days after posting	$40 a claim, or $165 for a quarter section
Pay rent each year	DNR	November 29	$40 or more a claim
Do the yearly work	On the claim	Year ending September 1	$100 of work per 40 acres
Record the work	State recording district	November 29	$20 first page, $5 each added page

Start with your map

Our Alaska maps come as four zips, one for each survey area BLM uses there: Copper River, Fairbanks, Kateel River and Seward. They show federal claims only, active and closed, from BLM Alaska's records. BLM records the real edges of each claim in Alaska, so each shape on the map is one claim, not a section box. Tap one to see its name, whether it's lode or placer, when it was staked or closed, its BLM serial number and its size.

The maps don't show state claims, and they don't show who owns the land. A closed claim with no active claim on top of it is a good place to start looking, but the ground may now be state land, Native corporation land or a park, and it may have an active state claim on it.

One example from the November 2026 Fairbanks map is a closed placer claim called DISCOVERY, about 29 acres, closed Nov 19, 1986, with the BLM serial number AK106523303. BLM's record puts it in sections 8 and 9 of T8S R29E, Fairbanks Meridian, about 12 miles north of Chicken. DNR's Alaska Mapper shows that ground is state land now, in the Fairbanks recording district. Two state claims were staked there later and have closed too, and none is active today. So a new claim there would be a state claim, staked and filed under the state-land steps below.

Check the ground first

1. **Find out whose land it is.** DNR's Alaska Mapper has a Mining Claim Research Map that shows state land, state claims and federal claims. BLM's land map, linked from its SDMS website, shows land that has passed to the state or to Native corporations and land closed to mining, and links to BLM's Master Title Plats.
2. **Look up the claims there.** In BLM's records at reports.blm.gov/reports/MLRS, choose Mining Claims – Serial Register Page and enter the serial number from the pop-up. BLM's records don't list state claims, so check Alaska Mapper for those.
3. **Check that the land is open.** You can't stake in national parks, national monuments, wilderness areas or military land, and private land, including Native corporation land, is off limits. Some state land is closed to claims or open only to leases, and Alaska Mapper shows those orders. DNR lets you stake land the state has picked but not yet received, at your own risk.
4. **Walk the ground.** A new federal claim can take up to 90 days to reach BLM's records, and a state claim 45 days to be recorded, so look for fresh posts and notices before you put up your own.

5. **Make a discovery.** Every claim needs a discovery of a valuable mineral. BLM's test is whether a sensible person would spend more time and money trying to develop a mine there, and recording a claim and paying the fees won't make it valid without one. Alaska's state claims use the same test.

Claim types and sizes

Federal land: a lode claim covers gold in solid rock, like a quartz vein, and can be up to 1,500 feet long and 600 feet wide. A placer claim covers loose gold in sand and gravel. Alaska's law limits a single placer claim to 20 acres and 1,320 feet long, and a group of eight or more can claim up to 160 acres. Pick the type that fits what you found.

State land: there's no lode or placer split. A traditional claim is staked on the ground, no more than 1,320 feet on its longest side, with lines running north-south and east-west, so it's 40 acres at most. An MTRSC claim follows the survey grid instead: a quarter-quarter section of about 40 acres, or a quarter section of about 160 acres. You have to be a U.S. citizen at least 18 years old, or meet one of the law's other tests, such as a company set up to do business in Alaska. Before you've found gold, you can stake a prospecting site instead, which costs $305 for two years and gives you the only right to stake claims inside it.

Federal land, step 1: Post your notice

The day you post the notice is your location date, and every deadline counts from it. Alaska's law is written for the person who found the deposit, so make your discovery first. Post a plain sign at the northeast corner. The law puts lode notices there and lets placer notices go on any corner post, so the northeast corner works for both and matches BLM's Alaska guide. The notice has to give all of these:

- The name or number of the claim and the name of each locator
- The date of location, which is the day you post it
- **Lode:** about which way each corner and angle post lies from the next, and how far apart they are
- **Placer:** how many feet long and wide the claim is

Use a separate notice for each claim. BLM has no set form, and its Alaska guide has a sample notice.

Federal land, step 2: Mark the corners

Alaska's law gives no day count for marking, so mark the corners when you post the notice, and always before you record. At every corner and angle of the claim, put a solid stone monument or a hewn post, at least 3 feet high and 3 inches across. Mark each one with the claim's name, which corner it is, and which way the boundary lines run, and cut, blaze or mark the lines so they're easy to follow. Where a corner can't go in its true spot, put a witness post nearby that shows where it is.

BLM doesn't allow perforated or uncapped pipe as markers, because of wildlife deaths. Alaska's law lists no digging for a new claim.

Federal land, step 3: Record with the recording district

Within 90 days after posting, record a certificate of location in the recording district where the claim sits. Alaska has recording districts instead of counties, and DNR's Recorder's Office runs them. The certificate has to give all of these:

- The name or number of the claim, and how many feet long and wide it is
- The date you made the discovery and the date you posted the notice
- The name of each locator

- A description tied to a natural object or permanent monument, so a person who knows the area can find the claim

Alaska's recording rules add these for every paper:

- White paper no bigger than 8.5 by 14 inches, with type of at least 10 point
- 2 inches of blank space across the top of the first page, and 1-inch margins everywhere else
- A title, like Certificate of Location, and the name of the recording district
- The name and address it should be mailed back to
- Original signatures, and the meridian, township, range and section

BLM's Alaska guide says the top margin is 1 inch, but the state's rule says 2 inches, so leave 2. A paper that misses the margins can still be recorded, but it costs $50 more. Alaska's law doesn't ask for the certificate to be signed in front of a notary.

Recording costs $20 for the first page and $5 for each added page, such as a map, and $2 for each name or claim name over six on one paper. Make checks out to the Department of Natural Resources. Missing the 90 days counts as giving up the claim. To fix a mistake later, record an amended certificate the same way, but it can't take away rights someone else gained.

Federal land, step 4: File with BLM

BLM needs its own filing by the 90th day, and it advises recording with the recording district first, though its Alaska guide says it will take a copy that isn't recorded yet if you send the recorded one later. Send the date of location, each owner's name and mailing address, the claim's name and type, its acres, its meridian, township, range, section and quarter section, and a map. BLM asks for GPS points for the corners, but they aren't required. You can file online in MLRS at mlrs.blm.gov with a login.gov account, by mail, or in person at BLM's offices in Anchorage or Fairbanks.

Claim	Fees	Total
Lode	$25 + $49 + $200	$274
Placer, up to 20 acres	$25 + $49 + $200	$274
Placer, 21 to 40 acres	$25 + $49 + $400	$474

The three fees are the processing fee, the location fee and the first maintenance fee, for claims located on or after September 1, 2026. Each added 20 acres of placer, or part of 20 acres, adds $200.

A claim that isn't recorded with BLM and the recording district by the 90th day is abandoned and void under federal law, even if the ground is good. BLM says it refunds the location and maintenance fees in that case, after the appeal period.

State land, step 1: Post your notice and mark the corners

No state claim is complete until you've found a valuable mineral inside it, so make your discovery first. Put a stone monument or post at each corner, at least 3 feet high and 2.5 inches across, marked with the claim's name and its corner number. Number 1 is the northeast corner, then go clockwise: 2 southeast, 3 southwest, 4 northwest. DNR says PVC pipe, a 4x4 post, rebar with a 4x4 on top, a blazed tree or a rock cairn all work. For an MTRSC claim, set the corners as close as you can to the section's real quarter corners, using GPS or a topo map.

Attach a notice to the northeast corner. It can be a copy of the certificate you'll record, or a metal tag, and the day you post it starts the 45 days. It has to give all of these:

- The name or number of the claim, and the date you post the notice
- **Traditional:** how many feet long and wide it is
- **MTRSC:** the meridian, township, range, section, and quarter or quarter-quarter section
- A sketch of how it sits next to nearby claims
- Each locator's name and current mailing address

State land, step 2: Record the certificate

Within 45 days after posting, record a certificate of location in the recording district where the claim sits. That's half the federal time. Use DNR's form for your kind of claim, or one like it. It has to give all of these:

- The name or number of the claim
- The month, day and year of your discovery and of posting the notice
- The meridian, township, range, section and quarter sections, plus the length and width in feet for a traditional claim
- Each locator's name, mailing address and signature
- The name of the recording district
- A map at 1 inch to the mile or closer, showing the claim, the land, the section lines, nearby claims and land that isn't the state's

DNR wants the map in black and white, no bigger than 8.5 by 11 inches, with a scale and a north arrow and 1-inch margins. Alaska Mapper's Mining Claim Sketch Map makes one. The page rules and fees are the same as for a federal claim, and Alaska's law doesn't ask for a notary. Missing the 45 days counts as giving up the claim.

State land, step 3: Pay the first rent

DNR has to receive the first rent within 45 days of posting too: $40 for a traditional or quarter-quarter section claim, or $165 for a quarter section claim. Send a copy of the certificate with it, recorded or not. You can pay at a DNR Public Information Center in Anchorage or Fairbanks, by mail, or at the recording office when you record, if you bring DNR's rental worksheet. Late rent counts as giving up the claim.

The first rent only covers you until September 1, and the next year's rent is due then, so a claim staked in summer owes rent again within months. A state claim doesn't go to BLM at all.

Re-staking a closed claim

Re-staking a closed claim means making a brand-new claim, and none of the old owner's rights carry over. Check whose land it is today first, since the steps follow the land, not the old claim. A claim staked the federal way on state land still falls under the state rules, so use the 45-day steps there.

Federal land: BLM treats a re-staked claim as a new one, with a new serial number and the same fees, and it needs a new notice, not an amended one. BLM says you may use the old markers, but each marker has to carry your claim's name, so re-mark them.

State land: anyone can stake over an abandoned state claim unless the old owner fixed the problem first. The old owner, and close family or co-owners, have to wait a year after the claim was abandoned.

Keeping a federal claim each year

On or before September 1 each year, pay BLM $200 per lode claim, or $200 for each 20 acres of a placer claim, or the claim is forfeited. If you stake before September 1 but file with BLM after it, you'll owe two maintenance fees at once, one for each year, unless you qualify for the small miner waiver and file it when you record the claim.

If you do the yearly work instead, Alaska's law asks for a sworn statement of it, called an affidavit, recorded with the recording district within 90 days after September 1, so record it by November 29. It gives the claim's name and where it is, the days of work and the value of any improvements, the dates, who asked for the work, and what was paid and by whom if the owner didn't do it. Sign it in front of a notary.

Alaska's law excuses its yearly work rule when federal law does, and paying BLM's fee does that. The law doesn't say outright that the affidavit is excused too, so to be safe, record a sworn statement by November 29 that you paid BLM's fee.

With 10 or fewer claims nationwide, you can do at least $100 of work on each claim instead of paying. File the free waiver form with BLM by September 1, on paper because it can't be filed online, then file an affidavit of the work with BLM by December 30 at $15 per claim. The recording district affidavit is still due by November 29.

A claim doesn't give you a free hand on the surface. Work beyond casual use can need a notice or a plan of operations, so talk to the local BLM field office or Forest Service ranger district first.

Keeping a state claim each year

Rent for each new year is due September 1 and has to be paid by November 30, so pay it by November 29. It goes up as the claim gets older:

Years since staked	Traditional or quarter-quarter	Quarter section
0 to 5	$40	$165
6 to 10	$85	$330
11 or more	$205	$825

A new MTRSC claim pays half rent in the rent year after it's staked. Late rent counts as giving up the claim.

Each work year starts at noon on September 1, and the first one starts on the first September 1 after you post. Do at least $100 of work on each traditional or quarter-quarter section claim, or $400 on a quarter section claim. Extra work can count for up to four later years. Instead of working, you can pay DNR the same amount by September 1, for no more than five years in a row.

Either way, record a statement of annual labor in the recording district within 90 days after the work year ends, so record it by November 29. DNR's form asks for each claim's name and ADL number, its township, range and section, what you did and its value. Sign it in front of a notary. One statement can cover several claims.

A state claim also owes a royalty of 3 percent of net income on what you produce, and it doesn't give you the surface to yourself: you can't block public access without DNR's written OK.

Permits for digging and dredging

Each year you plan to explore, mine or move equipment, on federal or state land, file an Application for Permits to Mine in Alaska (APMA) with DNR. The one form goes to every agency involved, and DNR says October or November isn't too early for the next season.

On DNR's state land, panning, hand tools, and a suction dredge with an intake of 6 inches or less and an engine of 18 horsepower or less, pumping no more than 30,000 gallons a day, are generally allowed without a DNR permit. Work in a fish stream still needs a Fish Habitat Permit from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) first. ADF&G gives these out for small dredges and highbankers, often over the counter.

The Department of Environmental Conservation's small suction dredge permit covers intakes up to 6 inches. Keep a copy of it and your Fish Habitat Permit with you. Since January 2026, only a few places, such as some creeks near Circle and Fairbanks, need you to register online each year for $25.

Who to ask

- **BLM Alaska State Office:** Call 907-271-5960 for the public room, or 907-267-1251 for the office. The office is at 222 West 7th Avenue #13, Anchorage, AK 99513, with the public room open 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday, Wednesday and Friday, and by phone Tuesday and Thursday.
- **BLM Fairbanks District Office:** Call 907-474-2200. The office is at 222 University Avenue, Fairbanks, AK 99709, open 7:45 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday to Friday.
- **DNR Public Information Centers:** Call 907-269-8400 in Anchorage or 907-451-2705 in Fairbanks about state claims, rent and Alaska Mapper. The offices are at 550 West 7th Avenue, Suite 1360, Anchorage, AK 99501, and 3700 Airport Way, Fairbanks, AK 99709, open 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday to Friday. For help with a claim's form or map, call DNR's Mineral Property Management office at 907-269-8642.
- **ADF&G Habitat Section:** Fish Habitat Permits for dredging and sluicing. Call 907-459-7289 in Fairbanks or 907-267-2342 in Anchorage, or read ADF&G's small scale mining permits.
- **Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation:** Call the mining section at 907-451-2142 about the small suction dredge permit.

Where these rules come from

- Alaska Statutes 27.10: federal claims, notices, markers, recording and the yearly affidavit
- Alaska Statutes 38.05.185 to 38.05.275 and 11 AAC 86: state claims, rent, yearly work and re-staking
- Alaska Statutes 40.17, 11 AAC 06 and 11 AAC 05.200: page rules and recording fees
- DNR's mining claim forms and fact sheets on staking, permits and allowed uses
- BLM's 2026 Alaska mining claim guide and mining claim fees
- 43 U.S.C. 1744 and 30 U.S.C. 28f: the yearly filing and the maintenance fee

Alaska recording districts

A claim is recorded in the recording district where the ground is. Alaska has 34 districts instead of counties, and DNR's Recorder's Office records for all of them from two offices, open 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., Monday to Friday. DNR's recording district map shows which one your claim is in. Call before you mail anything, since offices move and hours change.

Recording districts	Recorder's address	Phone
Aleutian Islands, Anchorage, Bristol Bay, Chitina, Cordova, Haines, Homer, Iliamna, Juneau, Kenai, Ketchikan, Kodiak, Kvichak, Palmer, Petersburg, Seldovia, Seward, Sitka, Skagway, Talkeetna, Valdez, Wrangell	550 West 7th Ave., Suite 108, Anchorage, AK 99501-3564	907-269-8876
Barrow, Bethel, Cape Nome, Fairbanks, Ft. Gibbon, Kotzebue, Kuskokwim, Manley Hot Springs, Mt. McKinley, Nenana, Nulato, Rampart	3700 Airport Way, Fairbanks, AK 99709-4699	907-452-3521