How to Stake and File a Mining Claim in Arizona

To stake and file a mining claim in Arizona, you post a location notice on the ground, mark the boundaries, record the notice and a map with the county recorder, and file with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). You have 90 days from the day you post the notice to finish all of it. A new lode claim costs $274 in BLM fees, plus the county's recording fee.

Arizona is strict about these steps, because state law says that missing a step, a date or a required map detail counts as abandoning the claim.

Last checked November 6, 2026. This is a plain-words summary of Arizona and federal law, not legal advice. Fees and rules change, so confirm dates and costs with your county recorder or BLM before you rely on them.

The steps at a glance

Step	Where	Deadline	Cost
1. Post your location notice	On the claim	This starts the clock	No fee
2. Mark the boundaries	On the claim	90 days after posting	Your posts or stones
3. Draw your claim map	At home	Before you record	No fee
4. Record the notice and map	County recorder	90 days after posting	$30 per document
5. File with BLM	Online in MLRS, or BLM in Phoenix	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

Start with your map

A filled closed box on your Arizona map means that section has no active claims today, which makes it a good place to start looking. Its pop-up gives you what the paperwork asks for: the county, the township, range and section, and the BLM code.

One example from the November 2026 map is a closed placer box in Yavapai County at T8N R5W Sec 9, Gila and Salt River Meridian, with the BLM code 14 0080N 0050W 009. A box covers a section of about 640 acres and doesn't show a claim's exact edges, so the map tells you where to look and your own checks tell you whether you can stake there.

Check the ground first

1. **Look it up in BLM's records.** Go to reports.blm.gov/reports/MLRS, choose Mining Claims – Geographic Report, enter the BLM code, and tick Active and Filed. Our step-by-step MLRS guide walks through each screen.
2. **Check that the land is open to mining.** BLM's Master Title Plats, on the GLO Records website, show what's open. You can't stake in national parks, national monuments, wilderness areas, Indian reservations or military land, and private land is off limits.
3. **Watch for Arizona state land.** Federal mining claims don't apply there. The State Land Department uses exploration permits and mineral leases instead.
4. **Walk the ground.** A new claim can take up to 90 days to reach BLM's records, 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.

Lode or placer

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, and can be 20 acres per person, up to 160 acres for a group of eight or more. The markers and fees differ, so pick the type that fits what you found.

Step 1: Post your location notice

The day you post the notice is your location date, and every deadline counts from it. Put up a monument, which can be a pile of stones at least 3 feet high or a post sticking up at least 4 feet, and post your signed notice in or on it.

- **Lode claim:** the monument goes on the centerline of the claim, inside its boundaries.
- **Placer claim:** the monument goes at one corner, inside the boundaries, and it's separate from your corner markers.

The notice has to give all of these:

- The name of the claim
- Your name and address
- The date of location
- The length and width of the claim in feet, and the distance in feet from the monument to each end
- The general course of the claim
- Where the claim is, tied to a natural object or permanent monument, plus the section, township and range if you know them

Step 2: Mark the boundaries

You have 90 days from posting, and the boundaries have to be easy to trace on the ground. Posts must stick up at least 4 feet and be at least 1.5 inches across, and stone monuments must be at least 3 feet high.

- **Lode claim:** six markers, one at each corner and one at the center of each end line.
- **Placer claim:** a marker at each corner or angle point.

Mark each one to show which corner or end center it is. BLM doesn't allow perforated or uncapped pipe as markers, because of wildlife deaths.

Step 3: Draw your claim map

Arizona requires a map, plat or sketch with the recorded notice. You don't need a surveyor, but the map has to let a reasonably knowledgeable person find the claim on the ground. It can't be bigger than 8.5 by 14 inches, and one inch can't equal more than 2,000 feet. It has to show all of these:

- The name of the claim, and whether it's a lode, placer or millsite claim
- The section, township and range, with a course and distance from a corner of the claim to a public land survey monument
- The scale, the county and a north arrow
- The type of corner and location monuments you used
- The bearing and distance between corners

A placer claim that follows legal subdivisions gives the legal description instead of the tie to a monument and the bearings. On land that hasn't been surveyed, tie a corner to a government survey or mineral monument, or to a prominent natural object if you can't find one.

The Arizona Geological Survey has free location notice and claim map forms, hosted by BLM. They aren't official forms and some are several years old, so check them against these steps before you use them.

Step 4: Record with the county recorder

Within 90 days of posting, record a signed copy of the notice with the map attached at the recorder's office in the county where the claim sits. If the posted notice left out the section, township and range, add them before you record. State law sets the fee at $30 per document, and the recorder can tell you how it counts a notice with its map.

Arizona's recording law lets the recorder turn away a document that doesn't meet these basics:

- A title at the top that says what the document is, like Location Notice
- Original signatures
- Clear print of at least 10-point type
- A page no bigger than 8.5 by 14 inches

Leave a 2-inch margin at the top of the first page for the recorder's stamp, and a half-inch margin on the other sides. If you record in person, bring a photo ID, which Arizona has required since September 11, 2026.

Step 5: File with BLM

BLM needs its own filing by the 90th day, and it advises recording with the county first. Send BLM a copy of the recorded notice, your map and the fees. You can file online in MLRS at mlrs.blm.gov with a login.gov account, or by mail or in person at BLM's Arizona State Office in Phoenix.

BLM's Arizona office checks that every claimant signed the certificate of location, which is your location notice, and a missing signature gets a defect notice.

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 county 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.

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. Arizona's law says a relocation is made the same way as any other location, so all five steps apply, and Arizona doesn't require any digging for it.

Arizona does give one shortcut for re-staking. If the old claim's location work included a recorded map, you can do your relocation work by resurveying it, or by checking that its boundaries are right, and then recording a map of your own. Plan on posting a new notice either way, because the law doesn't say the old map replaces it. The county recorder can tell you whether the old claim has a map on file.

Keeping your 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 close to September 1, ask BLM which year your first payment covers. Arizona's law says you may also record an affidavit of fee payment with the county before December 31. That's optional when you pay the fee, but a recorded affidavit is good proof that you paid.

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. Federal law also requires a yearly county filing from anyone doing the work, so record the affidavit with the county recorder by December 30 too.

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

The newest version of this guide is at goldmapsonline.com/how-to-stake-a-mining-claim-in-arizona.html. Check it before you file, since fees and rules can change after you download your maps.

Arizona county recorders

A claim is recorded in the county where the ground is. Call before you mail anything, since offices move and hours change.

County	Recorder's address	Phone
Apache	75 West Cleveland, St. Johns, AZ 85936 Mail: P.O. Box 425	928-337-7515
Cochise	1415 Melody Lane, Building B, Bisbee, AZ 85603	520-432-8350
Coconino	110 E. Cherry Ave., Flagstaff, AZ 86001	928-679-7850
Gila	1400 E Ash Street, Globe, AZ 85501	(928) 402-8740
Graham	921 Thatcher Blvd., Safford, AZ 85546	928-428-3560
Greenlee	253 5th Street, Clifton, AZ 85533	(928) 865-2632
La Paz	1112 Joshua Avenue, Suite 201, Parker, AZ 85344	928-669-6136
Maricopa	301 West Jefferson, #200, Phoenix, AZ 85003	602-506-3535
Mohave	700 West Beale Street, Kingman, AZ 86401 Mail: P.O. Box 7000	(928) 753-0701
Navajo	100 East Code Talkers Drive, Holbrook, AZ 86025 Mail: P.O. Box 668	928-524-4194
Pima	240 N Stone Avenue, Tucson, AZ 85701 Mail: P.O. Box 3145, Tucson, AZ 85702-3145	(520) 724-4350
Pinal	31 N Pinal Street, Building E, Florence, AZ 85132	520-866-6830
Santa Cruz	2150 N. Congress Drive, Suite 101, Nogales, AZ 85621	520-375-7990
Yavapai	1015 Fair Street (2nd floor), Prescott, AZ 86305	(928) 771-3244, Option 6
Yuma	298 S. Main Street, Yuma, AZ 85364	928-373-6020

Who to ask

- **BLM Arizona State Office:** Call 602-417-9200, or the Information Access Center at 602-417-9528. The office is at One North Central Avenue, Suite 800, Phoenix, AZ 85004-4427, open 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday to Friday.
- **Arizona Geological Survey:** 520-621-2470. It keeps the free forms and mineral rights information, but it doesn't run claims.

Where these rules come from

- Arizona Revised Statutes 27-202 to 27-208: location notices, markers, maps, relocation and yearly affidavits
- Arizona Revised Statutes 11-475, 11-480 and 11-472: county fees, document rules and photo ID
- BLM's Arizona state requirements and mining claim fees
- 43 U.S.C. 1744 and 30 U.S.C. 28f: the yearly filing and the maintenance fee