How to Stake and File a Mining Claim in Colorado

To stake and file a mining claim in Colorado, you make a discovery, post a notice where you found it, mark the boundaries, record a location certificate with the county clerk and recorder, and file with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). Colorado counts its county deadline from your discovery: 90 days for a lode claim, but only 30 days for a placer claim. BLM gives you 90 days from the day you post the notice. A new lode claim costs $274 in BLM fees, plus $43 for the county.

A Colorado lode claim also needs a discovery shaft at least 10 feet deep, dug within 60 days of uncovering the vein, or a survey map in its place. That matters most if you re-stake a closed lode claim from our map, because the law asks for a new shaft or the old one dug 10 feet deeper. Colorado's yearly county filing is optional, and its date is December 30.

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

The steps at a glance

Step	Where	Deadline	Cost
1. Post your notice	At your discovery	The day you find it; this starts the clock	No fee
2. Mark the boundaries	On the claim	Before you record	Your posts
Lode: dig the discovery shaft	At your discovery	60 days after you uncover the vein, and before you record	Your own work
3. Record a lode certificate	County clerk and recorder	90 days after discovery	$43
3. Record a placer certificate	County clerk and recorder	30 days after discovery	$43
4. File with BLM	Online in MLRS, or BLM in Lakewood	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, if you choose	County clerk and recorder	December 30	$43

Start with your map

A filled closed box on your Colorado 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 Park County at T9S R76W Sec 10, Sixth Principal Meridian, with the BLM code 06 0090S 0760W 010. 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 Colorado state land.** Federal mining claims don't apply there. Colorado's law lets you stake unleased state mineral land, but you have to tell the State Land Board within 10 days after you post your notice and arrange a permit, then take a lease within 60 days of your discovery.
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.

Colorado treats the two very differently: a lode claim needs a discovery shaft and gets 90 days to record, while a placer claim needs no digging but gets only 30 days. Pick the type that fits what you found.

Step 1: Post your notice

Colorado's law is written for the person who made the discovery, so make your discovery first. Colorado counts its county deadline from the day of discovery, while BLM counts its deadline from the day you post your notice, which is your location date. Post the notice the same day you make the discovery, so both clocks start together, and write that date down. There's no state form, so you can write your own notice.

- **Lode claim:** post a plain sign or notice at the point of discovery, on the surface. It has to give the name of the lode, the name of the locator and the date of discovery.
- **Placer claim:** post a plain sign or notice on the claim. It has to give the name of the claim, the name of the locator, the date of discovery and the number of acres or feet you claim.

Step 2: Mark the boundaries

Colorado's law says to mark the boundaries before you record your certificate. It doesn't give a number of days, so mark them right away, well inside your deadline.

- **Lode claim:** six solid posts, one at each corner and one at the middle of each side line. Sink them in the ground, and hew or mark the side that faces the claim. Where bedrock keeps you from digging, set the post in a pile of stones. If a spot is too steep or dangerous, put the post at the nearest safe point and mark it to show where it belongs.
- **Placer claim:** a solid post sunk in the ground at each angle of the claim, which means every corner and every bend in its lines.

The law gives no size for the posts, so make them big and solid enough to find and follow. BLM doesn't allow perforated or uncapped pipe as markers, because of wildlife deaths.

A lode claim also needs a discovery shaft. This is a hole you dig down on the vein at your discovery. It has to be at least 10 feet deep, measured from the lowest point of its rim, and deeper if that's what it takes to show a clear vein. You have 60 days from the day you uncover the vein to dig it, and it has to be done before you record your certificate. Colorado's law counts two other kinds of digging the same as a shaft:

- An open cut, crosscut or tunnel that cuts the vein 10 feet below the surface
- A tunnel dug at least 10 feet in along the vein from where you found it

Instead of digging, you can attach a map made from an actual field survey to your certificate and record it within your deadline. It has to be drawn at about 1 inch to 500 feet and show your name and address, the land's legal subdivisions if the land is surveyed, and the claim's lines with their directions and distances, tied to the nearest section or quarter-section corner or to a permanent monument. A map like that usually takes a surveyor. Placer claims need no discovery digging under Colorado law.

Before you dig, call the Colorado Division of Reclamation, Mining and Safety (DRMS). Colorado's law asks for a notice of intent to DRMS, with a fee and a reclamation bond, before prospecting like sinking shafts or digging pits. The same law leaves out location work and any single dig of 1,600 square feet or less, no more than two per acre, and a discovery shaft usually fits, but ask to be sure. BLM's Colorado office also asks you to contact BLM or the Forest Service before you disturb the ground. Cover or fence the hole when you leave, so people and animals can't fall in.

Step 3: Record with the county clerk and recorder

Record a location certificate with the clerk and recorder in the county where the claim sits: within 90 days of your discovery for a lode claim, and within 30 days for a placer claim. BLM's Colorado flyer counts those days from the location date, which can be later, so count from your discovery to be safe. The certificate is a separate paper from the notice you posted, and each one can hold only one claim. It has to give all of these:

- The name of the claim, and for a placer, the words placer claim
- The name of each locator and the date of location
- **Lode:** how many feet you claim along the vein on each side of the center of the discovery shaft, and the general direction of the vein
- **Placer:** the number of acres or feet you claim
- A description tied to natural objects or permanent monuments that identifies the claim

Colorado's law says a lode certificate that leaves out any of these is void. BLM's Colorado office also wants the claim type, the meridian, township, range, section and quarter section, and each locator's current mailing address, so put those in too. It says the certificate must be a new, original paper, not an old one that's been changed, so sign the original in ink and record that.

Colorado's law doesn't say the certificate needs a notary, and the clerk can record it without one.

Colorado's recording law sets one page rule, and the clerk can turn away a paper that misses it. County clerks add a few rules of their own. To meet them all:

- Use 8.5 by 11 or 8.5 by 14 inch paper, with type of at least 10 point
- Leave a blank margin of at least 1 inch at the top of each page and half an inch on the other sides
- Put the name and mailing address the clerk should send it back to on the first page

State law sets the fee at $40 a document, plus $3 in state and county surcharges, so clerks charge $43 no matter how many pages it has. Lake and San Miguel counties list mining claims at that price. A paper counts as recorded once the clerk accepts it and the fee is paid, so send the fee with anything you mail, and mail it well before your deadline.

If you find a mistake in your certificate later, or want to change your boundaries, Colorado's law lets you file an additional certificate. It can't take away rights someone else gained in the meantime.

Step 4: File with BLM

BLM needs its own filing by the 90th day after you post the notice, and it advises recording with the county first. Send BLM a copy of the recorded certificate, a map of the claim 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 Colorado State Office in Lakewood.

BLM's Colorado flyer asks for a map that sketches the claim's boundaries and its discovery point and shows exactly where the claim is.

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. For a placer claim, Colorado's own county deadline is 30 days from discovery, so don't count on the full 90.

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. All four steps apply. Someone else may have staked the ground the day after it closed, so check BLM's records before you start.

For a lode claim, Colorado's law gives two ways to re-stake, and both mean digging:

- Dig a new discovery shaft and set new boundaries, the same as for a new claim

- Or dig the old discovery shaft 10 feet deeper than it was when the claim was given up, and set new boundaries or use the old ones, replacing any posts that are missing or destroyed

Either way, put up a new location stake. The law doesn't describe it, so set a solid post at your discovery and fix your notice to it. The law also doesn't say whether the survey map can take the place of the shaft on a re-staked claim, so plan to dig. Old shafts can cave in, flood or hold bad air, so if the old one isn't safe to work in, dig a new one instead.

Colorado's law has no re-staking rule for placer claims, so treat one as a new claim and set every post yourself.

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 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.

Colorado's law lets you record a sworn statement, called an affidavit, with the county clerk and recorder on or before December 30 each year. It says you did the yearly work or paid BLM's fee, and names the claim, its county and mining district, the dates and who paid. The law makes it a choice, not a must, but once it's recorded it counts as proof that the work was done or the fee was paid, so it's worth the $43. Sign it in front of a notary, since it's a sworn statement, and bring a photo ID. The clerk and recorder can also take your oath for $2, so ask whether your county's office will.

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 asks small miners for a yearly county filing, so record the Colorado affidavit by December 30 too.

A claim doesn't give you a free hand on the surface. Anything beyond casual use, which means little or no ground disturbance, can need a notice or a plan of operations, so talk to the local BLM field office or Forest Service ranger district first. Mining beyond prospecting also needs a state reclamation permit from DRMS before you start.

We couldn't find a clear state rule for small suction dredges in Colorado, so ask DRMS and the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment before you run one.

Who to ask

- **BLM Colorado State Office:** Call 303-239-3600. The office is at the Denver Federal Center, Building 40, in Lakewood, open 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday to Friday. Bring a photo ID to get into the Federal Center, and call to confirm the mailing address before you mail anything.
- **Colorado Division of Reclamation, Mining and Safety:** Call 303-866-3567 about notices of intent before digging, and mining permits. The office is at 1525 Sherman Street, Suite 500, Denver, CO 80203, open 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday to Friday.
- **Colorado State Land Board:** Call 303-866-3454, or the Solid Minerals Leasing Manager at 720-854-3313, about mineral leases on state trust land, where federal claims don't apply.

Where these rules come from

- Colorado Revised Statutes Title 34, Article 43: notices, posts, the discovery shaft, certificates, re-staking and the yearly affidavit

- Colorado Revised Statutes 30-1-103, 30-10-406, 30-10-409, 30-10-416 and 30-10-421 and 38-35-106: page rules, recording, oaths and county fees
- Colorado Revised Statutes Title 34, Article 32 and 36-1-140: prospecting notices, mining permits and state land
- BLM Colorado's new claim flyer and mining claim fees
- 43 U.S.C. 1744 and 30 U.S.C. 28f: the yearly filing and the maintenance fee

Colorado county clerks and recorders

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

County	Clerk and Recorder's address	Phone
Alamosa	8999 Independence Way, Suite 101, Alamosa, CO 81101	719-589-6681
Archuleta	305 Village Dr, Pagosa Springs, CO 81147 Mail: P.O. Box 2589, Pagosa Springs, CO 81147	970-264-8350
Baca	741 Main Street, Suite #3, Springfield, CO 81073	719-523-4372
Boulder	1750 33rd St., Boulder, CO 80301	303-413-7770
Chaffee	104 Crestone Ave., Salida, CO 81201 Mail: P.O. Box 699, Salida, CO 81201	719-539-4004
Clear Creek	405 Argentine Street, Georgetown, CO 80444 Mail: PO Box 2000, Georgetown, CO 80444	303-679-2339
Conejos	6683 County Rd. 13, Conejos, CO 81129 Mail: PO Box 127, Conejos, CO 81129	719-376-5422
Costilla	400 Gasper St., Ste. 101, San Luis, CO 81152 Mail: PO Box 308, San Luis, CO 81152	719-937-7671
Custer	205 S. 6th Street, Westcliffe, CO 81252 Mail: P.O. Box 150, Westcliffe, CO 81252	719-783-2441
Delta	501 Palmer Street, Suite 211, Delta, CO 81416	970-874-2150
Denver	200 W. 14th Ave., Denver, CO 80204 Mail: 201 W. Colfax Ave., Dept. 101, Denver, CO 80202	311 or 720-913-1311 (outside Denver)
Dolores	409 N. Main St., Dove Creek, CO 81324 Mail: PO Box 58, Dove Creek, CO 81324	970-677-2381
Douglas	301 Wilcox Street, Castle Rock, CO 80104	303-660-7469
Eagle	500 Broadway, Suite 101, Eagle, CO 81631 Mail: P.O. Box 537, Eagle, CO 81631	970-328-8723
El Paso	1675 West Garden of the Gods Road, Colorado Springs, CO 80907	719-520-6200
Elbert	440 Comanche Street, Kiowa, CO 80117	303-621-3128
Fremont	615 Macon Ave., Room LL6, Cañon City, CO 81212	719-276-7330
Garfield	109 8th Street, Suite 200, Glenwood Springs, CO 81601	970-384-3700, ext. 1840
Gilpin	203 Eureka St., Central City, CO 80427 Mail: PO Box 429, Central City, CO 80427	303-582-5321
Grand	308 Byers Avenue, Hot Sulphur Springs, CO 80451 Mail: P.O. Box 120, Hot Sulphur Springs, CO 80451	970-725-3064
Gunnison	221 N. Wisconsin, Suite #C, Gunnison, CO 81230	970-641-2038
Hinsdale	317 North Henson Street, Lake City, CO 81235 Mail: PO Box 9, Lake City, CO 81235	970-944-2225, ext. 120
Huerfano	401 Main Street, Suite 204, Walsenburg, CO 81089	719-738-3000, ext. 503

County	Clerk and Recorder's address	Phone
Jackson	396 LaFever St., Walden, CO 80480 Mail: PO Box 337, Walden, CO 80480	970-723-4334
Jefferson	100 Jefferson County Pkwy, Suite 2560, Golden, CO 80419	303-271-8168
La Plata	679 Turner Drive, Ste C, Durango, CO 81303	970-382-6281
Lake	505 Harrison Ave, Leadville, CO 80461 Mail: P.O. Box 917, Leadville, CO 80461	719-486-4131
Larimer	200 W. Oak Street, First Floor, Fort Collins, CO 80521 Mail: PO Box 1280, Fort Collins, CO 80522	970-498-7860
Las Animas	200 E. First Street, Rm. 205, Trinidad, CO 81082	719-846-3314, Option 5
Lincoln	103 3rd Ave., Hugo, CO 80821 Mail: PO Box 67, Hugo, CO 80821	719-743-2444
Mesa	200 S. Spruce Street, Grand Junction, CO 81501 Mail: Department 5007, P.O. Box 20,000, Grand Junction, CO 81502-5001	970-244-1679
Mineral	1201 N. Main St., Creede, CO 81130 Mail: P.O. Box 70, Creede, CO 81130	719-658-2440
Moffat	1198 West Victory Way, Ste. 103, Craig, CO 81625-2716	970-824-9104
Montezuma	140 West Main Street, Suite 1, Cortez, CO 81321	970-565-3728
Montrose	317 South 2nd Street, Montrose, CO 81401	970-249-3362, ext. 2
Otero	13 W. 3rd St., Rm. 210, La Junta, CO 81050	719-383-3020
Ouray	541 4th Street, Ouray, CO 81427 Mail: P.O. Box C, Ouray, CO 81427	970-325-4961
Park	856 Castello Ave, Fairplay, CO 80440 Mail: P.O. Box 220, Fairplay, CO 80440	719-836-4333
Pitkin	530 E Main St, Suite 104, Aspen, CO 81611	970-429-2716
Prowers	301 South Main, Suite 210, Lamar, CO 81052	719-336-8011
Pueblo	215 W. 10th St., Pueblo, CO 81003	719-583-6507
Rio Blanco	555 Main Street, 2nd Floor, Meeker, CO 81641 Mail: PO Box 1067, Meeker, CO 81641	970-878-9460
Rio Grande	965 6th Street, Del Norte, CO 81132 Mail: P.O. Box 160, Del Norte, CO 81132	719-657-3334
Routt	522 Lincoln Avenue, Suite 21, Steamboat Springs, CO 80487	970-870-5556
Saguache	501 4th Street (Main Floor), Saguache, CO 81149 Mail: PO Box 176, Saguache, CO 81149	719-655-2512
San Juan	1557 Greene St., Silverton, CO 81433 Mail: PO Box 466, Silverton, CO 81433	970-387-8040
San Miguel	305 W Colorado Ave., Telluride, CO 81435 Mail: PO Box 548, Telluride, CO 81435	970-728-3954
Summit	208 East Lincoln Avenue, Breckenridge, CO 80424 Mail: P.O. Box 1538, Breckenridge, CO 80424	970-453-3470
Teller	101 W Bennett Avenue, Cripple Creek, CO 80813 Mail: P.O. Box 1010, Cripple Creek, CO 80813	719-689-2951, ext. 4
Weld	1250 H Street, Greeley, CO 80631 Mail: PO Box 459, Greeley, CO 80632	970-304-6530