Gold panners

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Although gold has definitely been found in the small creek that bubbles through Spring Valley Park, Jeri Jones emphasizes that panning is not allowed on public, government-owned, lands, because taking gold from these streams would be considered removing a natural resource, an

Special wide, shallow plastic pans are sold for panning minerals, and can be purchased at local rock shops, mineral shows, or through hobbyist mail-order supply catalogs. These experts prefer black or dark green pans, because the shiny yellow of the gold is more visible against the

flat, dark background.

Aluminum Piepans, used by many attending the seminar, aren't recommended for serious panning because the silvery surface does not offer enough contrast to the color of the gold

Gold is a very heavy mineral and will sink to the bottom of wherever it is deposited, including a piece of panning equipment.

When a likely spot is found, a shovelful of gravel should be placed in the pan, which is then swirled around in the water while being vigorously shaken to settle any flakes to the bottom.

Large rocks and pebbles can be removed by hand periodically, and the lessening volume of gravel material continuously swirled out by the creek waters, until only a heavy blackish sandy material remains in the bottom.

'If you can find that black sand, a magnetite material, then you're probably in the 'ball park', "Jones told rookies standing ankle deep in water at the seminar, eagerly searching through miscellaneous creekbed materials in their

Mica, also a shiny mineral that might be found, is a brighter yellow color, while gold is a duller

"Don't spend too much time in silted creeks," Schmerling suggests. "Pick a stream with some flow to it. Look for a place with gravel deposits of one to three feet, with bedrock under that, so any possible gold deposits would have to be contained.

"You can have two creeks side by side; one will have it and the other won't. It's best to work up a creek, maybe at a dozen or spots, where some barrier such as a vertical slate across the bottom, would catch deposits as they wash downstream. Natural riffles trap

Panning enthsiasts like Schmerling aren't discouraged by cold weather, and might be found kneedeep in streams edged with slivers of ice. But in that weather, he'll probably be using a "sluice," because the panning method causes hands to grow numb quickly in icy water.

A sluice is a trough, about ten inches wide by three to four feet long, with half-to three-quarter inch high cross pieces at intervals along the bottom to create a riffle

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effect. Gravel is shoveled in, and the creek water left to naturally flow through the trough, with the riffle pieces catching and holding any gold flakes. These can be hand made, or purchased from mineralhobby suppliers, at about the cost of \$25 to \$50 for a plastic or aluminum model.

Thus far, the most prolific local gold flake area is at an undisclosed southern Lancaster County location, although geologist Jones anticipates that the northern part of Lancaster County could likely have gold-bearing areas.

"Someone has to get out and look, and no one has really hunted there that we know of," he adds. Northern York County, toward the Dillsburg area, is worked by some panners, and potential goldbearing rock formations make up both the Pigeon and Hallam Hills in York County.

Jones estimates that perhaps 15 percent of York County's streams bear bits of the precious, elusive metal, while many in southern Lancaster County could yield panning finds.

Silver is often found in rock formations related to gold-finding, but so far that metal has not turned up locally, yet.

"There should be some around," insists the geologist. "Some silver has been found in the same type rocks in Maryland. But again, no one has really looked. And you must know what you are looking

"Ask first" heads the mineral experts' list of things to do when setting out to pan for minerals, if the search leads to private property.

people are pretty "Most cooperative if you tell them you'd like to look for gold in their streams, says Schmerling. However, if a few flakes of gold are found, some property owners may occasionally become a protective.

Panners do turn up things that have been lost sometimes due to high water. Schmerling recalls working a creek one day after high water and coming across part of an A-frame section from a farmer's tractor that had been washed a considerable distance downstream.

In the past, another Pennsylvania mineral generated some interest among area farmers.

Rutile, - a titanium, is a rusty reddish-brown to almost black colored crystal-like rock. When crushed, it turns white, and once was an important whitening agent, used in paint and even in false teeth. Farmers picked rutile from their fields and sold it to earn a few extra dollars.

Such field harvesting of the mineral has faded into history, and most rutile used today is obtained from Maryland's beach sands.

Numerous rock and mineral clubs are organized throughout Pennsylvania, with several in the southcentral and eastern parts of the state. Persons interested in further information on potential gold-bearing locations, or on panning for gold, may contact Jeri Jones at the York County Board of Parks and Recreation, R22, Box 33, York, 17042, or by calling 717-757-



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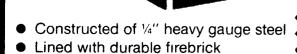
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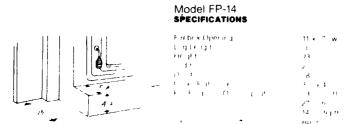
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