

Land access permissions for scientific fieldwork

Scientific research does not qualify as mining under the *Mining Act 1978* and, as a result, approval processes are slightly different to those required by prospectors and fossickers. However, scientific researchers are still required to obtain all land permissions relevant to their field area prior to visiting, and can be fined or prosecuted if the correct permissions have not been obtained. This document provides a list of potential permissions that may be required, and provides links to relevant information on land access.

Rock sampling

Researchers employed by, or professionally associated with, a recognised scientific or educational institution do not require a [Miner's Right](#) in order to collect samples, as long as the samples are to be used in their research. However, there may be restrictions placed on sampling on specific types of land. These restrictions are listed in the sections below.

Geoheritage Reserves

The Department of Mines, Petroleum and Exploration manages a small number of **State Geoheritage Reserves**, which protect outcrops and geological features of national and international scientific importance.

A permit, issued by the Geological Survey of Western Australia (GSWA), is required to visit all Geoheritage Reserves, and permission will only be granted to researchers for scientific or educational purposes. The early life Reserves are not considered suitable for tourism.

In addition to the strictly managed Reserves, the department also maintains a **Register of State Geoheritage Sites**, which are also considered to hold international and statewide scientific significance. Although no permissions are required to enter listed Geoheritage Sites, visitors are asked to take care not to sample or damage significant geological features within the Site. Therefore, researchers are asked to consider whether planned sampling work could be conducted in an area outside the Geoheritage Site or Reserve, as a way to protect the integrity of significant features within these registered localities. Researchers are encouraged to notify GSWA before conducting fieldwork in State Geoheritage Sites.

Use the 'Geoheritage Sites' layer (under 'Special category lands') in [GeoVIEW.WA](#) to tell whether an area falls within a registered Geoheritage Reserve or Geoheritage Site. More information on these localities can be found on the department's [Geoheritage webpage](#).

Acknowledgement of Country

The Department of Mines, Petroleum and Exploration (DMPE) respectfully acknowledges Aboriginal peoples as being the traditional custodians of Western Australia. We acknowledge the enduring connection Aboriginal people continue to share with the land, sea and sky through both their ancestral ties and custodianship to Country. We pay our respect to Elders both past and present, and acknowledge the value brought to our department through the collective contribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across Western Australia.

Pastoralists

Researchers must gain written permission from all **pastoral lease holders** on land they plan to work, as well as the pastoralists whose land they will cross to access field sites. The same restrictions placed on [prospectors and fossickers](#) working on pastoral land are also applicable to scientific researchers.

Use the 'Cadastre' layer in [GeoVIEW.WA](#) or [Tengraph Web](#) to determine land tenure. If a piece of land is a pastoral lease, the lot name will be prefixed with L PL. Contact information for each pastoral lease can be obtained from the relevant Local Government Authority or from [Landgate](#).

Native title

Researchers must contact all groups with **native title claims or determinations** in regions where the fieldwork will take place prior to fieldwork commencement. Native title holders must be provided with at least 12 weeks' notice to allow them to assess the proposed works and respond with any concerns on the research program. Use the 'Native Title' layers in [GeoVIEW.WA](#) or [Tenagraph Web](#) to obtain a list of the active and in process native title applications. A more official [map of Native Title claims](#) is available via the National Native Title Tribunal (NNTT); contact information for each native title area is available via the [NNTT's register](#).

Aboriginal Heritage

Consult the 'Aboriginal Heritage Places' layer in [GeoVIEW.WA](#) (under 'Special Category Lands') or the [Aboriginal Heritage Inquiry System](#) to check if there are any registered **Aboriginal Heritage Sites** in the study area. If Heritage sites are listed within the area of interest, plan to avoid the area of concern. If the registered site cannot be avoided, permission must be obtained from the relevant traditional owner groups before entering the locality. See the 'Native Title' section on this page on how to obtain contact information for traditional owner groups.

Other State Reserves

If fieldwork falls within any **Crown Reserves** (other than the Geoheritage Reserves mentioned previously) or Unallocated Crown Land (UCL), you will need to complete a [Crown Land Inquiry Form](#) through the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage (DPLH). For Reserves, you will also need to contact the relevant managing agency (such as a shire or State Government department).

Reserves land tenure can be identified using the 'Cadastral' layer on GeoVIEW. WA (lot name prefixed with R). Contact information for reserve management bodies can be obtained from the relevant Local Government Authority, Landgate or DPLH.

Mining tenure

Researchers must contact and receive written consent from all mining and exploration tenement holders in the areas they plan to work in, especially if there is a plan to collect samples. This is particularly important to identify areas that will need to be avoided for safety considerations, such as mining infrastructure, haul roads, earth moving equipment, etc.

Use the 'Tenements' layers on [Tenagraph Web](#) or [GeoVIEW.WA](#) to identify the affected mining tenure and to obtain contact information for each.

Sample export

Under the *Federal Protection of Moveable Cultural Heritage Act 1986*, some fossils and minerals are classed as Class B objects and may require an **export permit** before they leave Australia. Seek advice from the [Moveable Cultural Heritage Office](#) if you have any questions regarding sample export; it is recommended to start discussions months prior to fieldwork due to the complex nature of the export permit process.

Ensure you have received written permission from all the affected landowners and management bodies affected by your field research. Allow ample time to confirm all permissions, and permit any required negotiations **before** commencing your work.

Sample and specimen curation

Researchers are strongly encouraged to consult GSWA about the appropriate long-term storage of samples and specimens collected in Western Australia, and/or materials derived from samples collected in Western Australia. This is especially important for specimens cited in published research. GSWA maintains open-access collections conserving a range of geological materials, including core, geochemical and geochronological samples, and fossils, and gratefully accepts donations of materials within the scope of these collections.

To find out more about sample and specimen curation, and for any other queries regarding land access for scientific fieldwork, email: geological.survey@dmpe.wa.gov.au or head to our [website](#)

