

SEPA's position on gold panning

SEPA will not normally require an authorisation where individuals pan for gold provided good practice is followed (see below). Panning that does not follow good practice will require an application for a simple engineering licence (under the Controlled Activities Regulations, CAR). In addition, where water is removed from the river (abstracted), diverted or dammed (impounded) then the appropriate authorisation should be sought from SEPA and complied with. Guidance is contained in the [CAR practical guide](#).

Good practice requires that:

1. Panning is limited to hand panning using only sieves, gold pans, shovels and buckets, portable sluice, a hand operated pump **and not** using powered machinery/equipment e.g. electric pumps and powered dredges.
2. Panning is not undertaken during periods in which fish are likely to be spawning in the watercourse nor in the period between any such spawning and the subsequent emergence of the juvenile fish. Panning would therefore not be carried out between 1st November and 31st May where fish (including Atlantic salmon and trout) are present. For specific dates of when and what fish are present, please consult with Scottish Natural Heritage and your local Fisheries Trust or District Salmon Fisheries Board <http://fms.scot>
3. Where hollows are created in the river bed, that the bed material is replaced into the holes on the same day that it was removed
4. The activity does not involve digging into the river banks.
5. Panning is not carried out in water where there is a reasonable likelihood that, within 50 metres of such an operation, there are freshwater pearl mussels.

If the above good practice cannot be followed, then panning must not be carried out without first obtaining a CAR licence from SEPA.

SEPA will consider people carrying out panning operations who do not follow good practice and who do not have the correct SEPA authorisation, to be committing an offence under CAR and may take enforcement action. SEPA will work with other authorities such as Police Scotland and water bailiffs to monitor panning activities and ensure good practice is being followed.