

[Gold Maps Online](#) [Gold Maps for the Modern Prospector](#)

A product review by Alan Chenworth

I have spent the last few weeks messing around with *Gold Maps Online*, a mineral/claim location program that I downloaded off the internet. This program shows all the areas with mining claims in a state by state selection, and shows the location of these claims in quarter-section detail. In short, *Gold Maps Online*, is a whole new way to view the BLM mining claims data.

A few years ago, the BLM finally joined the modern information age, and built their Geocommunicator—a digital database that was web accessible. The only problem is that it was built by the government. Geocommunicator, while a significant improvement over the old system, is slow, cumbersome and difficult to navigate. The aerial photographs are poor quality, and the viewing window is small.

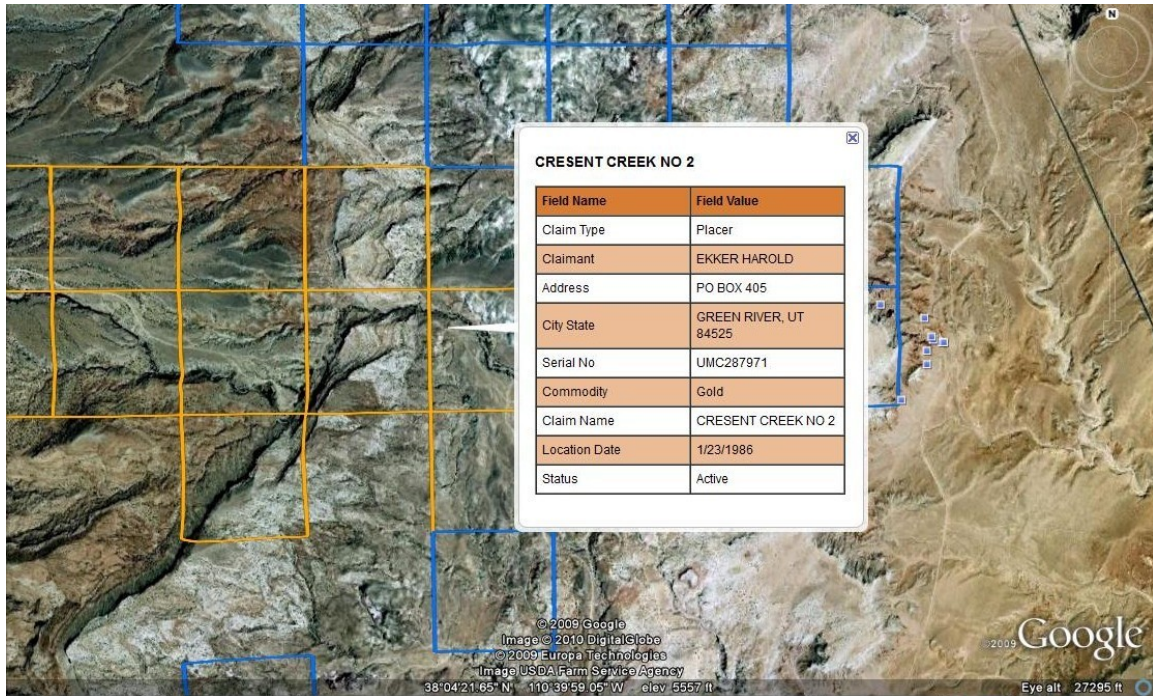
Because of the weakness of the BLM's website, *Gold Maps Online* took the same digital data set and overlaid the it on *Google Earth* images; while at the same time, re-constructing the data format to be more user-friendly and easier to read.

This program is different from other Gold Map systems in that it uses the **'active'** claim listings (instead of the closed claim listings used by competitors) to help you locate areas of interest. Closed mining claims can be a good indication of mineralization (and he kept it as an option)—but since someone will often file a claim and then drop it when he realizes that there is no gold (or little gold), it can be a little misleading. This program uses the BLM's current, *'active'* claim listing so that your search is guided to areas with current mineral potential—places where prospectors are currently working to uncover earth's treasures.

One click on a "claimed" square and you are given all the pertinent data on the claim—Is it load or placer? Who owns the claim? What is their contact info? What is the claim serial number (very important—if you are going to file next to them—you will want a copy of their Notice of Location, so you know the exact boundaries of the open land).

Of course the program isn't perfect—it does have a few limitations. The most notable is that due to the overlapping of some mining claims, not every claim in a quarter-section can be shown. This program will only show one claim per quarter section—generally, a lode claim will take precedence over a placer or other type of claim in these gold maps. These maps should be used by prospectors to

locate areas of interest. After using the map to find an area of interest, all you do is call the BLM and ask for an active claim listing for the section in question, get a Notice of Location for the pertinent claims, and you are ready to file.



A screen capture showing the quarter sections with active claims (yellow) and closed claims (blue); data window also shows all pertinent data.

The best part is that all of this information is draped over a clear, easy to see, easy to navigate aerial photo of the land. The *Google Earth* aerial photos that *Gold Maps Online* uses have greatly enhanced visuals over its Geocommunicator predecessor. You can move around, zoom in or out, tilt the landscape to better see the hill, canyons and other topographical relief. You can also adjust the position of the sun (light source) to change the shadow orientation—allowing you to get better contrast and visibility on different parts of the topography.

In addition to having a much larger viewing window, faster and smoother functions, and better pictures with this program, you will also have the capability of measuring distances and elevations, along with all of the other *Google Earth* functions, when doing your research. This will allow you the opportunity to calculate slopes and grades. These tools can be of great help to the prospector.

These maps are available for 12 of the 13 of the states where it is legal to file a federal mining claim, including Alaska, Washington, Oregon, California, Arizona, New Mexico, Utah, Nevada, Colorado, Wyoming, Idaho, and Montana. Sorry, South Dakota is not available due to the small number of claims in the state.

The cost of the program is \$29.95, and when you buy it, you get the data set for the entire state—and once you have purchased it you get to keep it. It is downloaded onto your computer where you can then use it as you see fit.

[Gold Maps Online](#) is a great prospecting tool. This program fills a much needed niche in the prospecting market. The maps they provide are both informative and useful. As a prospector, I must admit that it has already pointed the way to some areas that I intend to prospect.