

April 20, 2007

To all Rock and Mineral Organizations and Members:

As Field Trip Co-Chairman of the Oklahoma Mineral and Gem Society, I wish to bring to the attention of all rockhound groups and members, not only within the state of Oklahoma, but also those affiliated with the "Federations", a matter which may cause all of us to lose the privilege of conducting field trips to one of the most productive and easily accessible sites in this area.

This site is the General Materials Gravel Pit, a good collecting site conveniently located on the outskirts of Oklahoma City.

First, allow me to relate a bit of history regarding the long time association of the Oklahoma Mineral and Gem Society and the owners of this facility. I have been associated with OMGS since the 1980's, and the association of our club with this site predates this by many years. I attended my first club field trip there in the 1980's, and later was introduced to several of the owners and management personnel. During this era, there was an easygoing understanding that no club member or members would attempt to enter the site for the purpose of collecting, except on a scheduled club field trip. Certain safety equipment and rules of conduct was required all participants.

I don't recall any of the out of town clubs scheduling field trips to this site prior to the 1990's, however, in most cases the OMGS field trips were publicly announced and the invitation to participate was open to any club or individual. Many out of town rockhounds did attend, and thus was planted the seed that has become the root of our problem today.

These out of town guests returned to their local clubs and related stories of the fun they had and the material collected at this site. Naturally, others in their clubs desired to participate in a similar experience. Over the course of the last few years, many of these clubs have began scheduling their own field trips to the site, and up to now the management of General Materials have been very cooperative in attempting to accommodate these requests.

A recent very poorly handled incident has come to the attention of the General Materials owners, and consequently is jeopardizing any future field trips, unless we can obtain the cooperation of all.

More than a month ago, at the request of several OMGS members, I phoned the manager of General Materials to inquire about bringing our club and guests down for a half day hunt, preferably some time before the summer heat arrived. The manager suggested Saturday, May 5th, as being a date he thought they could accommodate our request, but he transferred me to their new foreman, as he is the one who will lose a half day off to come in to unlock the gate and be present while we hunt. As I visited with this gentleman, he thought May 5th would be OK, but requested that I call him again about two weeks before the date to confirm and remind him. Due to this lack of certainty of the event happening on May 5, I opted to announce it only to our membership during our March meeting. I also placed an article in the April, "Rockologist", with the idea in mind that if we had to change the date, it would be relatively easy for our calling committee to notify our membership of the change. There was no intention of limiting the event to OMGS members only, but I did not desire to make an announcement to the other clubs before knowing that it was definitely scheduled for May 5. I would hate to have our rockhound friends drive many miles only to find the gate locked.

As our regularly scheduled monthly meeting was April 19, I telephoned the foreman that afternoon to confirm up the date. He was unavailable at the time of my call, but the operator transferred me to the plant manager. He stated that he and the foreman had recently discussed our trip and he confirmed our date, but he also wished to discuss a problem.

He stated that a representative of the Tulsa Club had recently made a request for a field trip. He explained to the Tulsa member that OMGS had a field trip scheduled for May 5th, and requested that he get in touch with us and coordinate their trip on that date. The Tulsa Club representative stated that May 5 was not acceptable and became insistent that Tulsa be granted a different date. Somehow, the ownership of General Materials became aware of this incident, and have now issued rules which we all must adhere to or the site will be closed to all collecting.

General Materials management requests that all future field trip requests be handled and coordinated by the field trip chairmen of one club, and the scheduled collecting trips be opened to all clubs and guests who wish to attend. The manager suggested that OMGS handle this responsibility due to their long time association with OMGS, plus their personal knowledge of local club members they can contact in case of a problem. They also wish to limit the annual number of these trips. A trip during the spring and another in the fall should suffice. All club members and guests will be required to sign a Release From Liability Form. Certain safety gear may be required. Rules of conduct must be observed, and they expect all club members to police themselves and any guests present.

I feel their requests are reasonable. I sincerely hope all rockhounds and clubs will comply, for noncompliance means we will all lose. We must remember that we are their guests. The pit is in business to make money, not to fulfill the desires of a few rockhounds. I have recently been told by their management that they currently own or lease adjacent land underlain with the same gravel structure, and that at the current rate of production, this should guarantee continued production past the year 2050. I hope and trust that our future generations of rockhounds are allowed to continue enjoying many opportunities to collect from this site. Let us comply with their requests, so that the actions of one or two individuals do not result in our loss of this collecting site.

Paul W. Cinnamon

OMGS Field Trip Co-Chairman, 2007