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TRAILS & PARKS | ARTISAN LANDSCAPES | RESTORATION & REVEGETATION | FOREST MANAGEMENT

Narrative of Proposed East Side Crazy Mountain Trail between Halfmoon Campground (Big Timber Creek) and Sweet Grass Creek

January 3, 2020

Trail Overview:

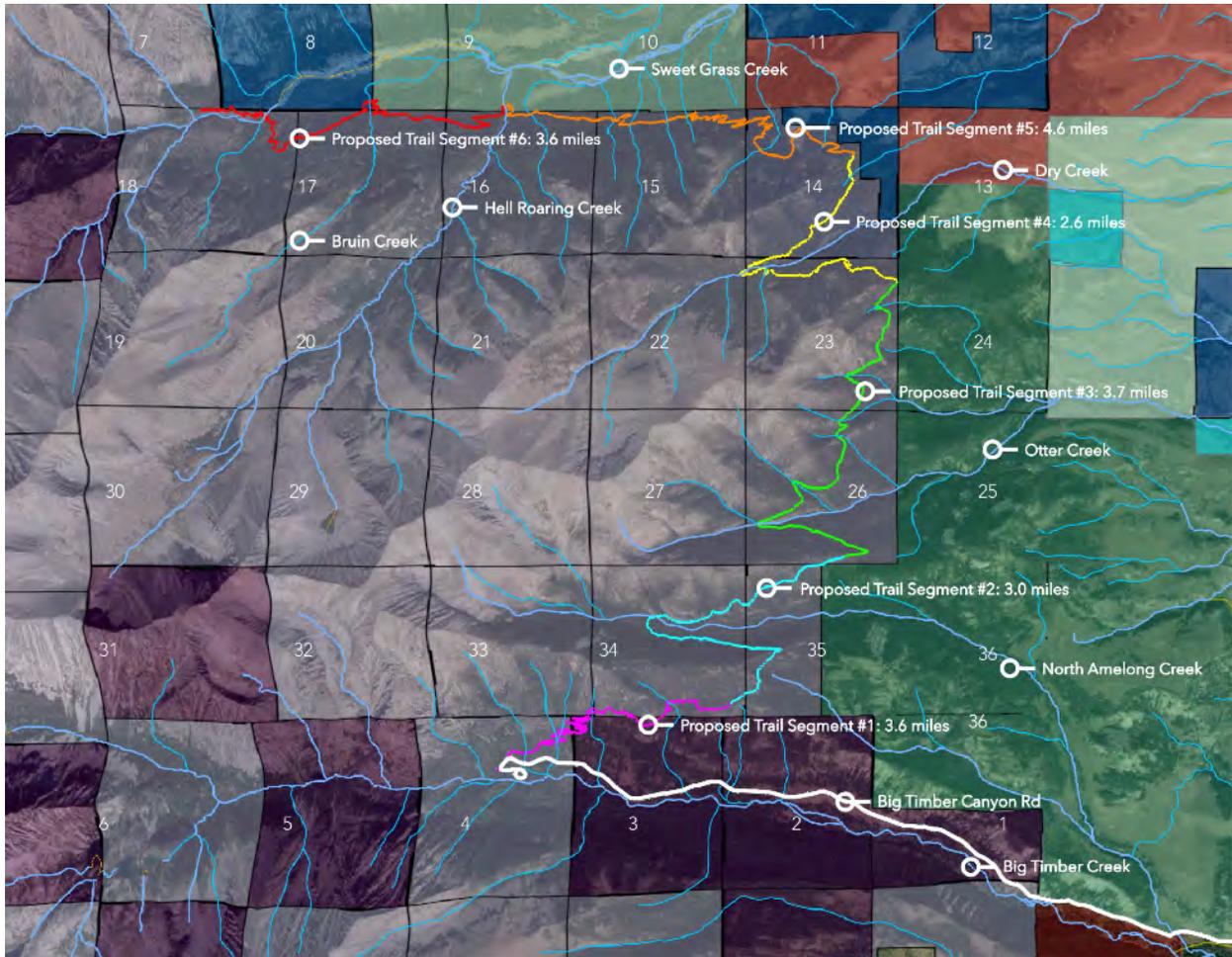
The new trail route will connect the existing trailhead at Halfmoon Campground, next to Big Timber Creek, to the existing trail along Sweet Grass Creek. The entire route will include over 21 miles of new trail. The new trail will be located almost entirely on federal lands consolidated as a result of a proposed federal land exchange. The elevations of the trail vary from 6,500' at both ends to a high point of 7,715' on the ridge between Otter and Dry Creeks. The average grade of the trail will be less than 10%. Along the twenty-one mile route, multiple perennial streams are crossed, including North Amelong Creek, Otter Creek, Dry Creek, Hell Roaring Creek, Bruin Creek, and Sweet Grass Creek. All of the costs of designing and constructing the new trail and improved trailhead will be paid for by the land exchange proponents.

Design Criteria:

- The proposed trail alignment will follow USFS guidelines for Hiker/Pedestrian and Pack and Saddle trail design parameters. Bicycles are not a designed use.
- Within the Hiker/Pedestrian and Pack and Saddle design parameters, the Crazy Mountain trail is laid out to meet USFS Trail Class 3 guidelines for grades (target 3%-12%), tread width (36"-48" max), curve radius (5'-8'), etc.
- Stream crossings have been located at fordable locations, as opposed to bridge locations.
- Access to water for pack and saddle users - perennial water sources are available at Big Timber, Otter, Dry, Hell Roaring, Bruin, and Sweet Grass creeks. North Amelong does not always flow at the ford location, but perennial water can be found a short distance downstream.

Trail Segments:

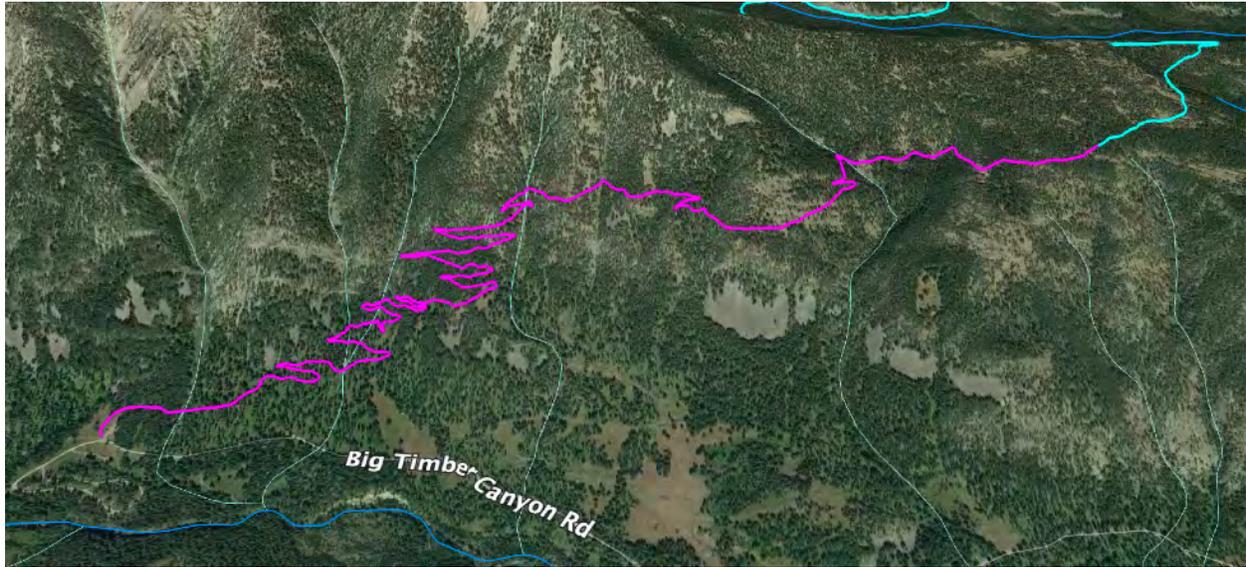
The new trail will provide access to multiple drainages between Big Timber Creek and Sweet Grass Creek. Each drainage has unique characteristics that will create myriad opportunities for solitude, enjoyment of nature, and access to outstanding wildlife habitat. Describing the route according to drainage allows a greater understanding of the topography. For the purposes of this summary the trail is described from south to north.

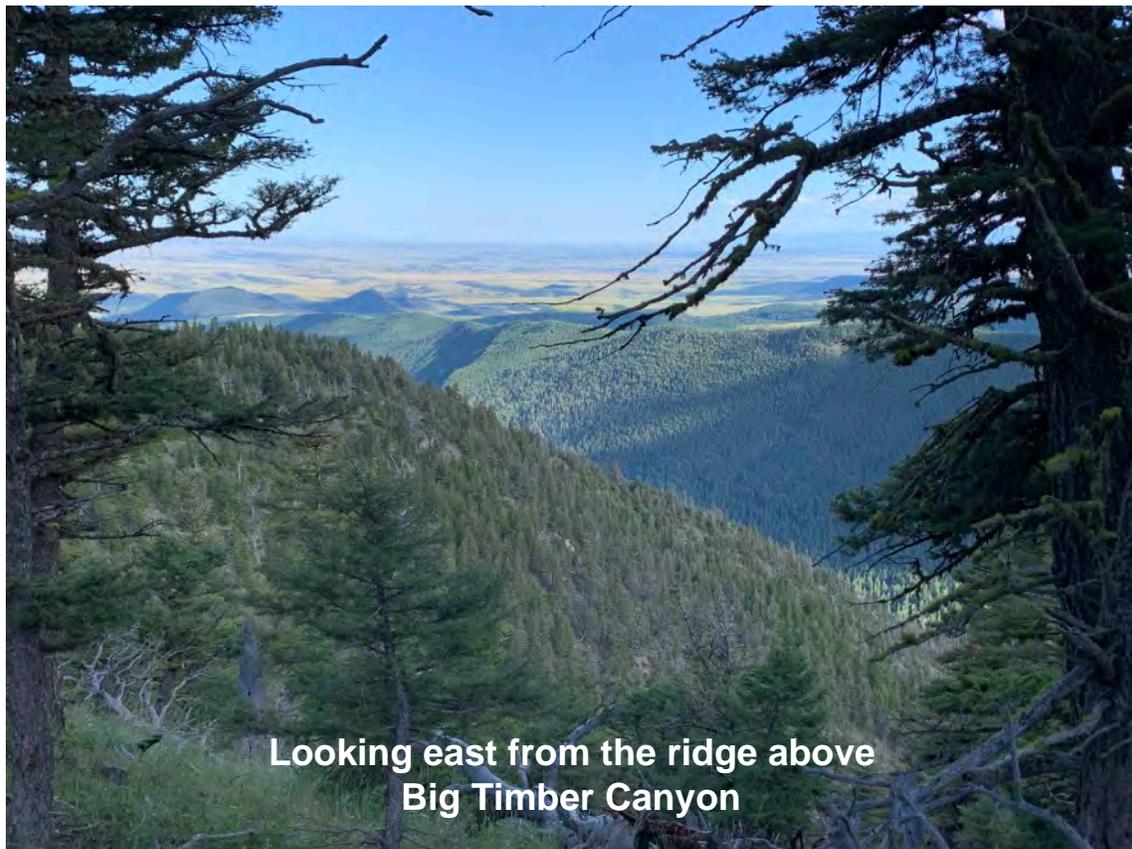


Segment 1 - Big Timber Creek (3.5 miles) magenta trail:

The trail begins at Halfmoon Campground, located at the end of Big Timber Canyon Road. The trailhead provides access to water, trailer parking, campsites, and a vault toilet. This first section of trail gains 1,000' in elevation as it ascends the ridge that separates Big Timber Creek from Amelong Creek. Segment 1 includes the most

technical terrain, as the trail must ascend through steep terrain to reach gentler slopes above. The south-facing slopes of Segment 1 are dominated by Douglas-fir, including many old-growth trees. As the trail gains elevation, incredible views of Big Timber Canyon, Big Timber Peak, and Crazy Peak are obtained.

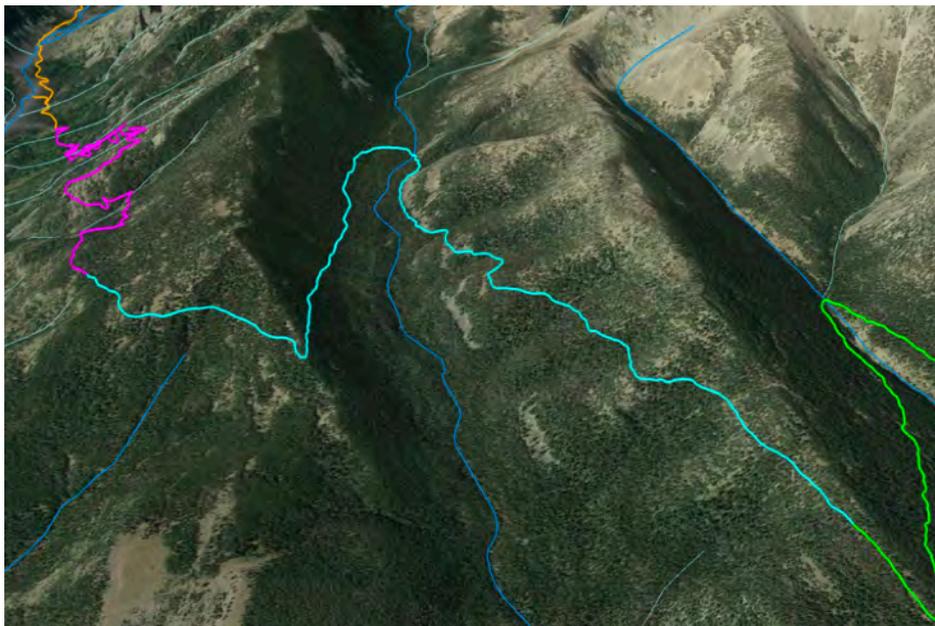




Looking east from the ridge above
Big Timber Canyon

Segment 2 - Amelong Creek (3.0 miles) blue trail:

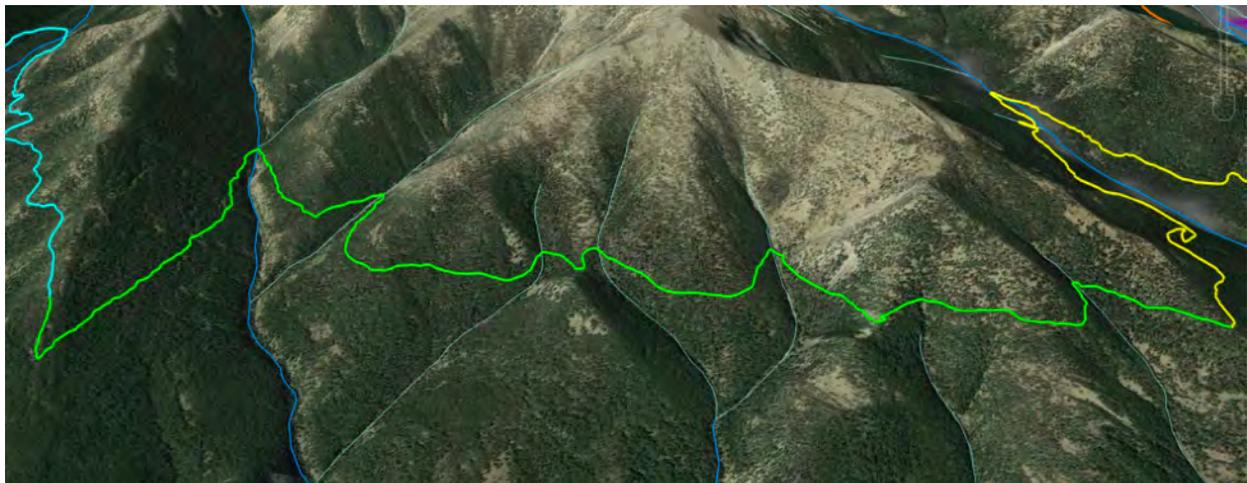
The Amelong Creek drainage includes gentle, open terrain above South Amelong Creek; steep, lodgepole pine dominated forest on the north-facing slopes south of the creek; and open, rocky terrain on the south-facing slopes north of the creek. This segment of trail avoids any switchbacks, and follows the contours of the land as it fluctuates between 7,450' and 7,650' in elevation. The understory is dominated by low-lying forbs, bunchgrasses, and wildflowers.

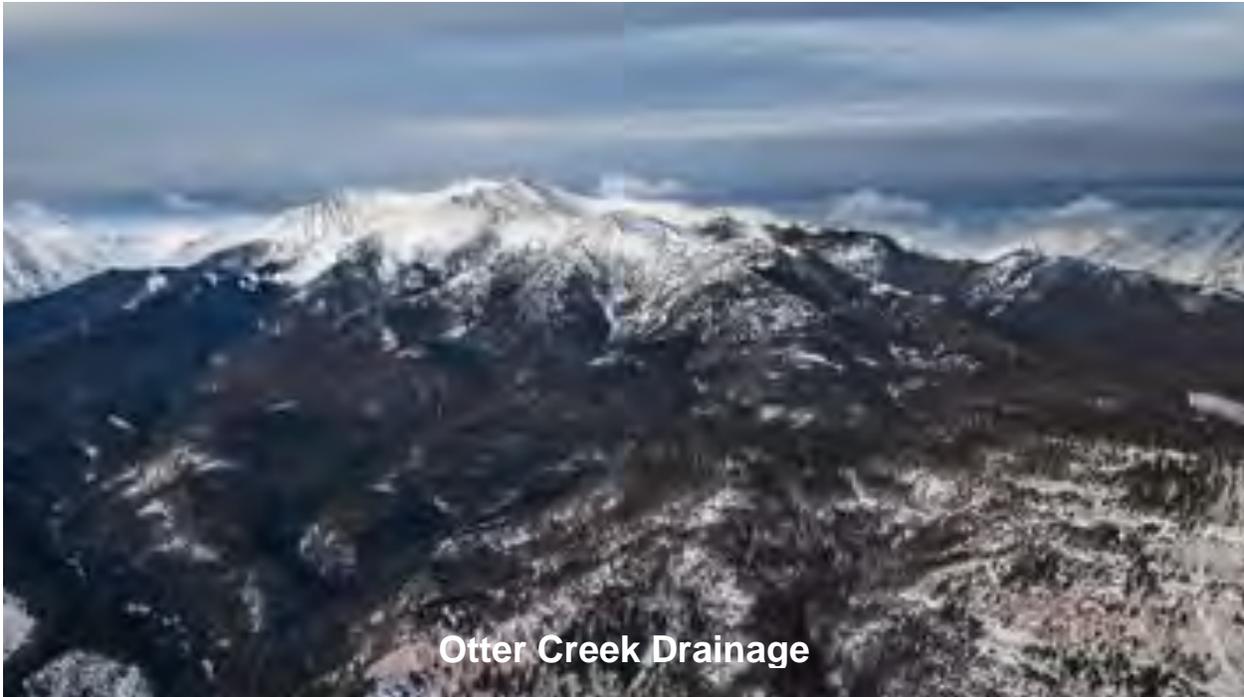




Segment 3 - Otter Creek (3.7 miles) green trail:

Otter Creek contains the gentlest terrain of the trail route. Similar to Amelong, the north-facing slope south of the creek is steeper but heavily forested with mature lodgepole pine. North of the creek, the trail passes through rocky, broken, south-facing slopes. As the trail bends northward, however, the terrain becomes gentler, with rolling contours and open forest. There are multiple small drainages through this area that make their way down to Otter Creek. The elevation of the trail generally follows contours as it fluctuates between 7,325' at the lowest elevation to 7,715' at the highest point.

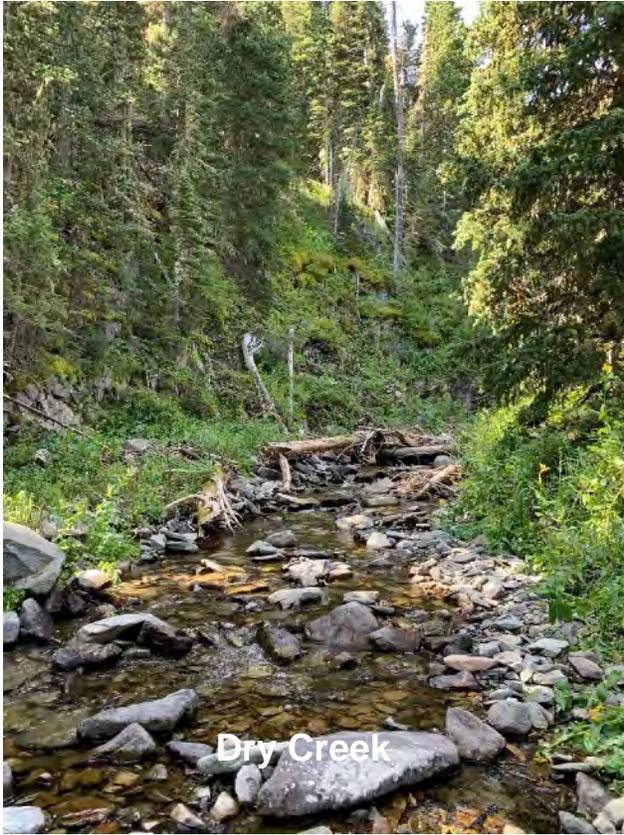




Segment 4 - Dry Creek (2.6 miles) yellow trail:

Dry Creek is a narrow, incised drainage that flows east out of the Crazies. Both the north-facing and south-facing slopes are heavily timbered. Contrary to its' name, Dry Creek has flowing water even in late August. Elevations of the trail vary from 7,350' to 7,700' at the highest point. Elk sign was extremely prevalent in the Dry Creek drainage.





Dry Creek



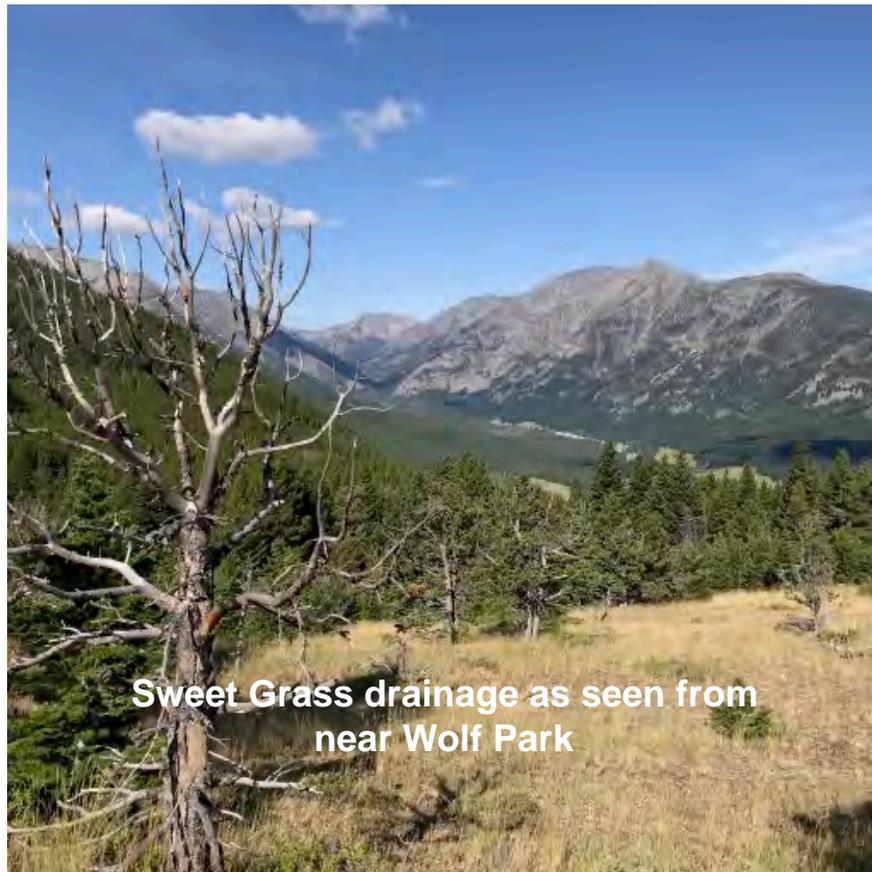
Bear Claw Marks



Mule deer in thick timber

Segment 5 - Sweet Grass - Wolf Park to Hell Roaring Creek (4.5 miles) orange trail:

Trail segment 5 descends through scenic meadows, wrapping through north-facing lodgepole-pine forests on its route to Hell Roaring Creek. With a high-point of 7,400', this section of trail descends to 6,150', losing approximately 1,250' of elevation from east to west. Although there are steep slopes through this area, the north-facing slopes are heavily timbered, and there are multiple drainages that bisect the route. The thick timber provides protection from wind and reduces snowpack depth.





Spring-fed meadow in the Sweet Grass drainage



Small Cliffs in Trail Segment 5



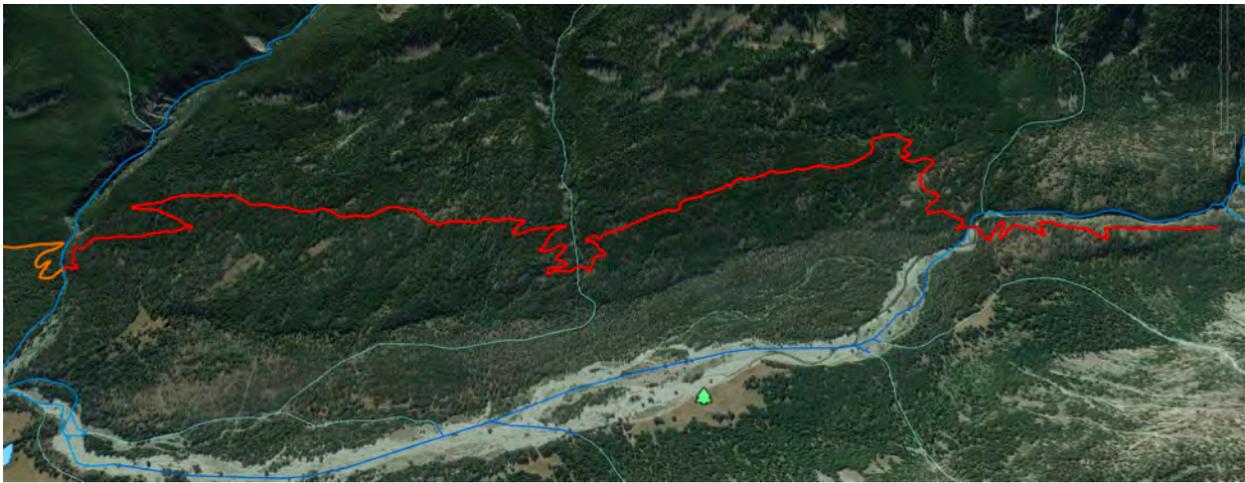
Looking down onto Sweet Grass Creek



Lodgepole forest & rock features

Segment 6 - Sweet Grass - Hell Roaring Creek to Sweet Grass Creek
(3.6 miles) red trail:

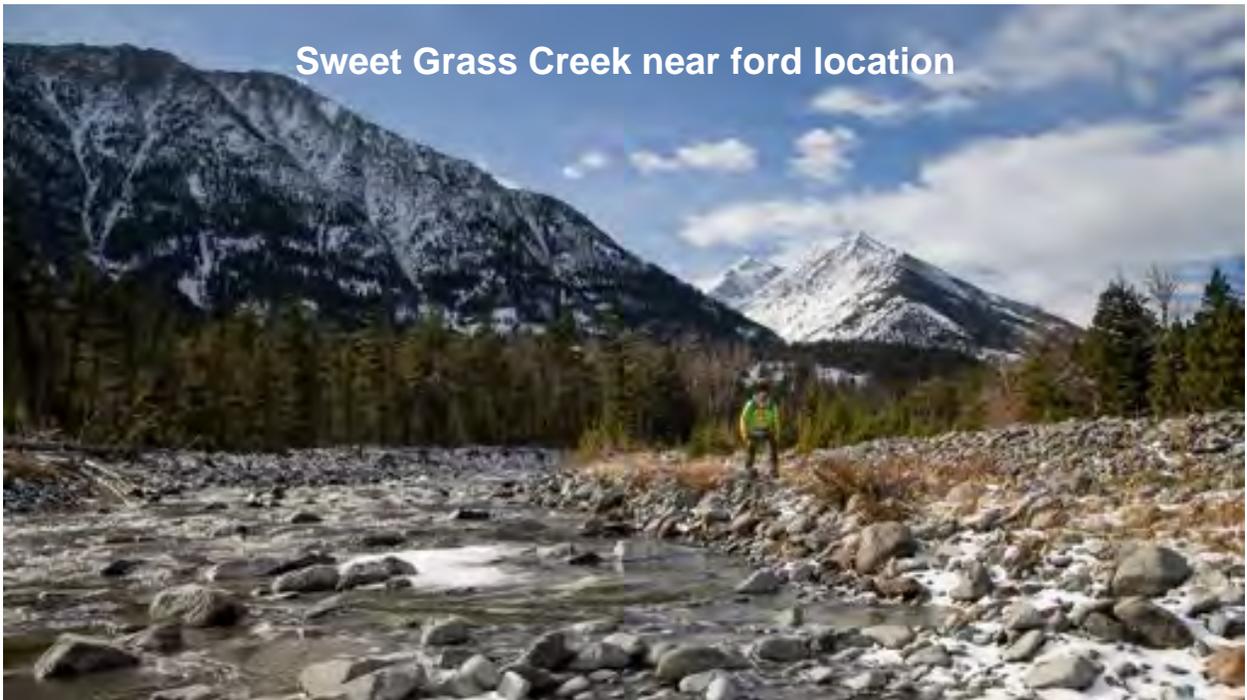
Trail Segment 6 navigates low-angle slopes from Hell Roaring Creek to the north side of Sweet Grass Creek. Elevations vary from 6,175' to 6,475' over the course of this 3.6 miles long trail segment. Midway along this route the trail fords Bruin Creek, a perennial stream similar in character to Hell Roaring Creek. As the trail approaches Sweet Grass Creek, the route navigates riparian areas including ponds and wetlands. The trail will ford Sweet Grass Creek at a wide, shallow location just downstream of where Sweet Grass emerges from a narrow box canyon. The timber through this section of trail is dominated by lodgepole pine, with smaller amounts of Douglas-fir and spruce.



Mature lodgepole between Hell Roaring & Bruin Creeks

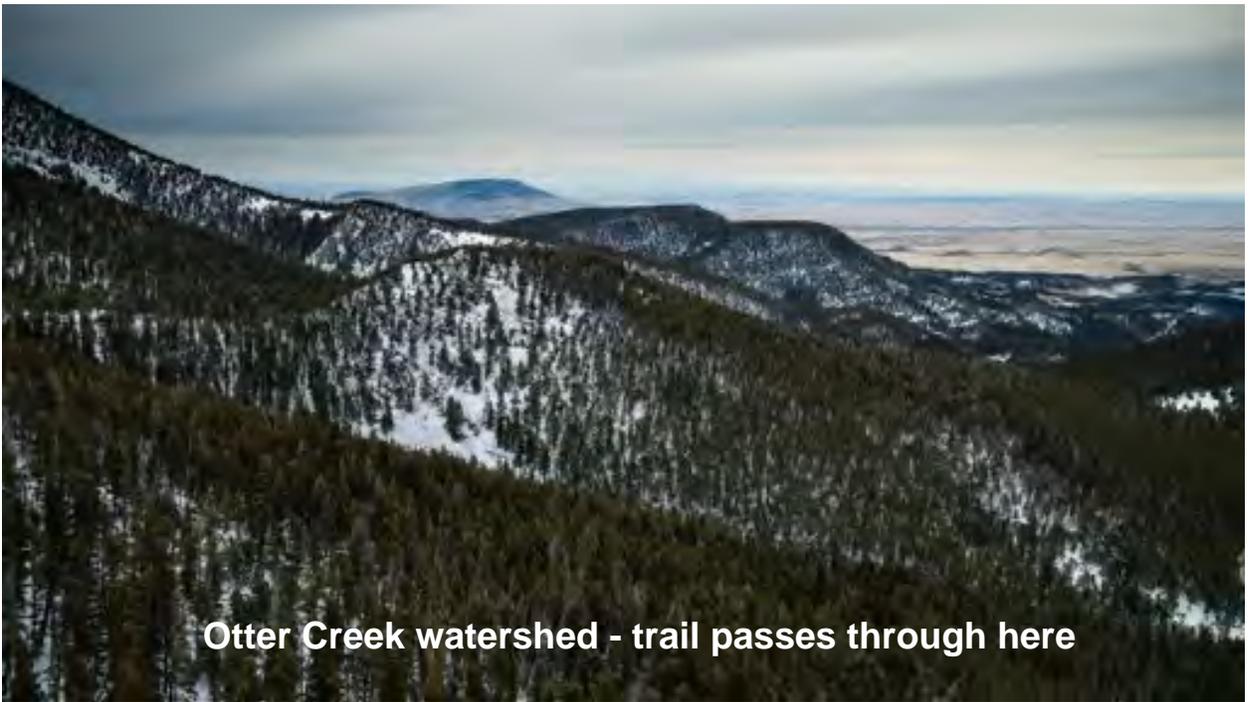


Sweet Grass Creek near ford location



Additional Photos:





Otter Creek watershed - trail passes through here



Dry Creek watershed looking east

Looking east in the Big Timber Creek watershed



**Bear scat & old-growth
Douglas fir**





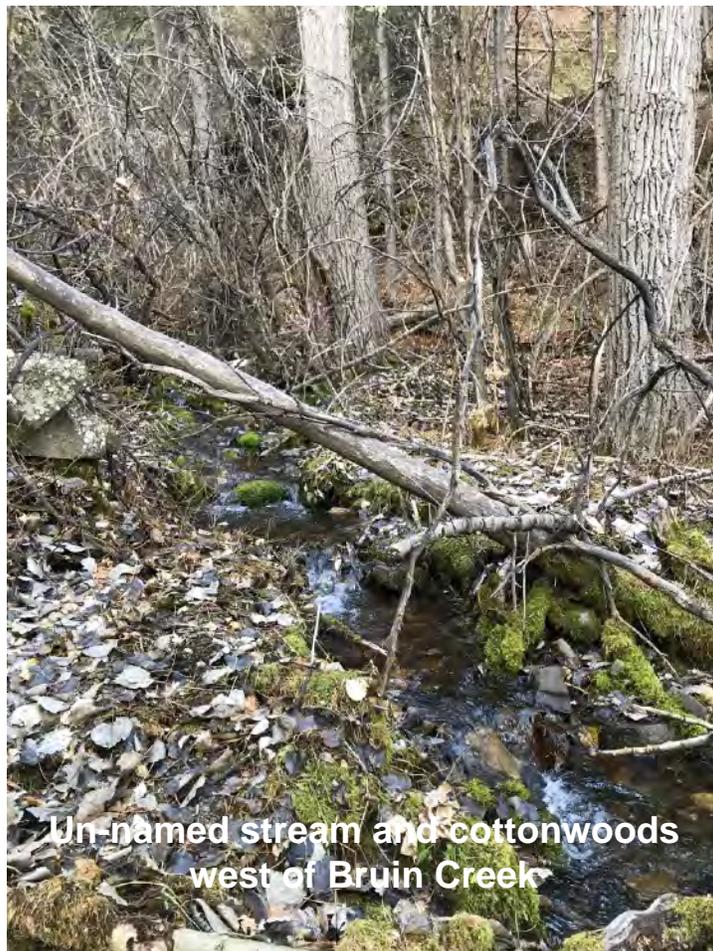
Elk on ridge in Amelong drainage



**Flagging trail on a south-facing slope in the Big
Timber Creek watershed**



Bear scat and Oregon grape



Un-named stream and cottonwoods
west of Bruin Creek



Dusky grouse in Otter Creek watershed

