

Horse Ridge Recreation Area

If you like hills and want to avoid the mountain winter snow, and don't want to travel far from the city of Bend, Oregon, this might be the place to explore. There are plenty of trails and great views. You might have to share the trail with exuberant bicyclists who love the wild slopes, so just give them space. Horse Range Recreation Area is managed by the Bureau of land management (BLM) and is about 20 miles east of Bend, Oregon office Highway 20. It's a good alternate to the snowy Cascades if you wanna stretch your legs, although during big snowstorms it could be tough to traverse, unless you were on some skis or snowshoes.

My day hike started me on a trail that isn't on the BLM map yet, and ended on a fairly steep Sandy Canyon Trail back to the trail head. Besides exploring new territory, I had a secondary goal of finding a tree species other than the ubiquitous western juniper. The ponderosa pine was not known to be on this mountain range, yet I lucked into it. I can now extend the specie's boundary maps beyond the Cascades and higher mountains of the High Desert.

I chose to start at the Horse Ridge trailhead, probably the most popular of the several ones there. It has access to a handful of trails, including the Sandy Canyon Trail. The trail I started on, however, is to the west of that more popular trail, and is not shown on the BLM map, but the trail is well traveled and you can't lose it. This trail, which is shown on my map, follows a small canyon and somewhat parallels the Sandy Canyon Trail up the slope. In order to connect to the Sandy Canyon Trail, I had to get to the connecting Horse Ridge Trail. But before doing that, I veered off of this trail and headed up to the top of the ridge to get a great view of the south west part of the recreation area. This is where I spotted the lone ponderosa Pine. I searched the area for any of its cohorts, but couldn't find any. I suspect there are more on the range. I logged this one and noted its coordinates. I added it to the great inaturalist.com website.

There is no drinking water on the trail or trailhead, so bring plenty. There are a lot of shady spots under the many western junipers there where you can get the greatest views of the expansive lowlands, beautiful Cascades, and other smaller mountain ranges to the east.

The BLM map, which is a good, detailed one, unfortunately is a little misleading. I have noted some apparent trail access points on that map where there's no parking and no obvious trailhead. So I would stick to the obvious trailhead markers on the map.

The green motorized access roads shown on their map is also very rough, and I wouldn't recommend anything, but a high clearance all-wheel drive vehicle. I also visited the Rickard Trailhead which has access to a small area with several short trails.

I have provided three maps at the end of this document. One shows the general area, one shows the trails I took, and the final one is the BLM map which show the trails I didn't get to, with a few remarks of mine.



From near the Horse Ridge Trailhead, looking up to the ridge



One of the very old western junipers in the area



The start of the trail is an old access road, but soon narrows



The great view to the north from the top of the ridge



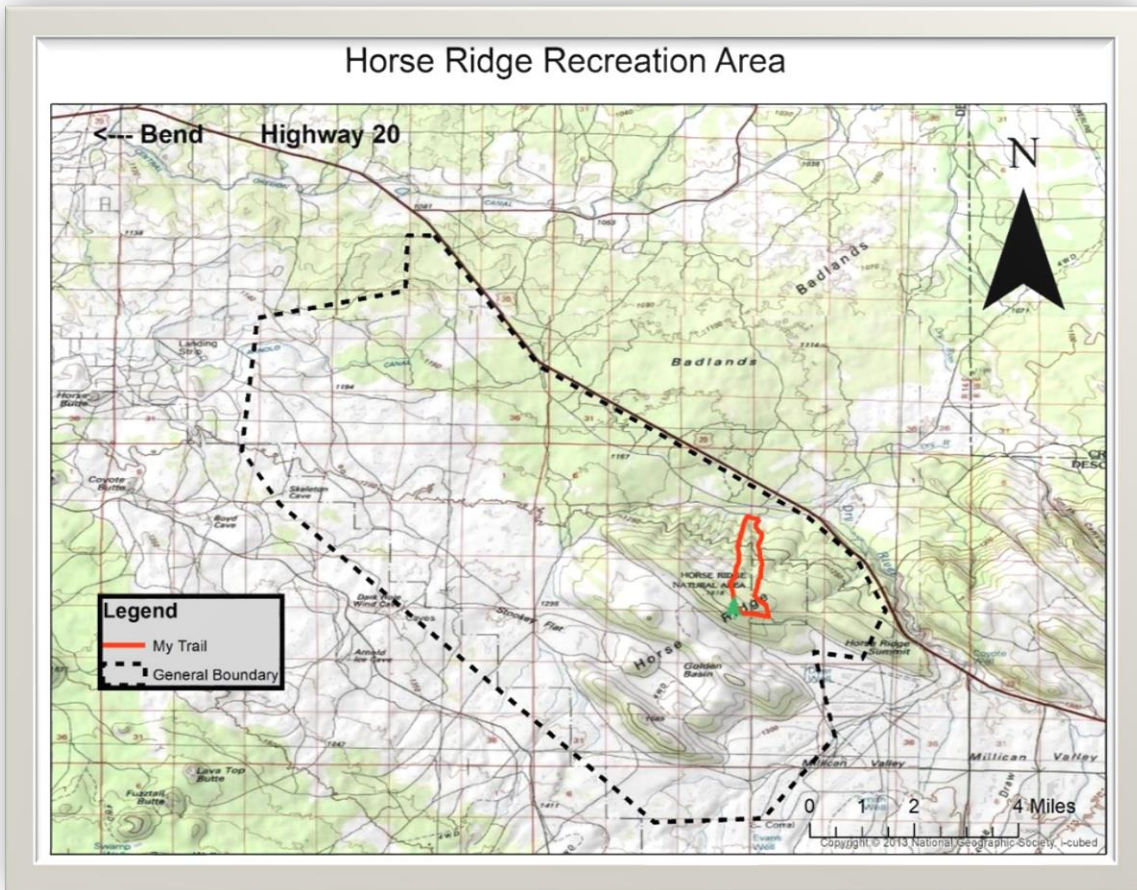
The lone ponderosa pine I found



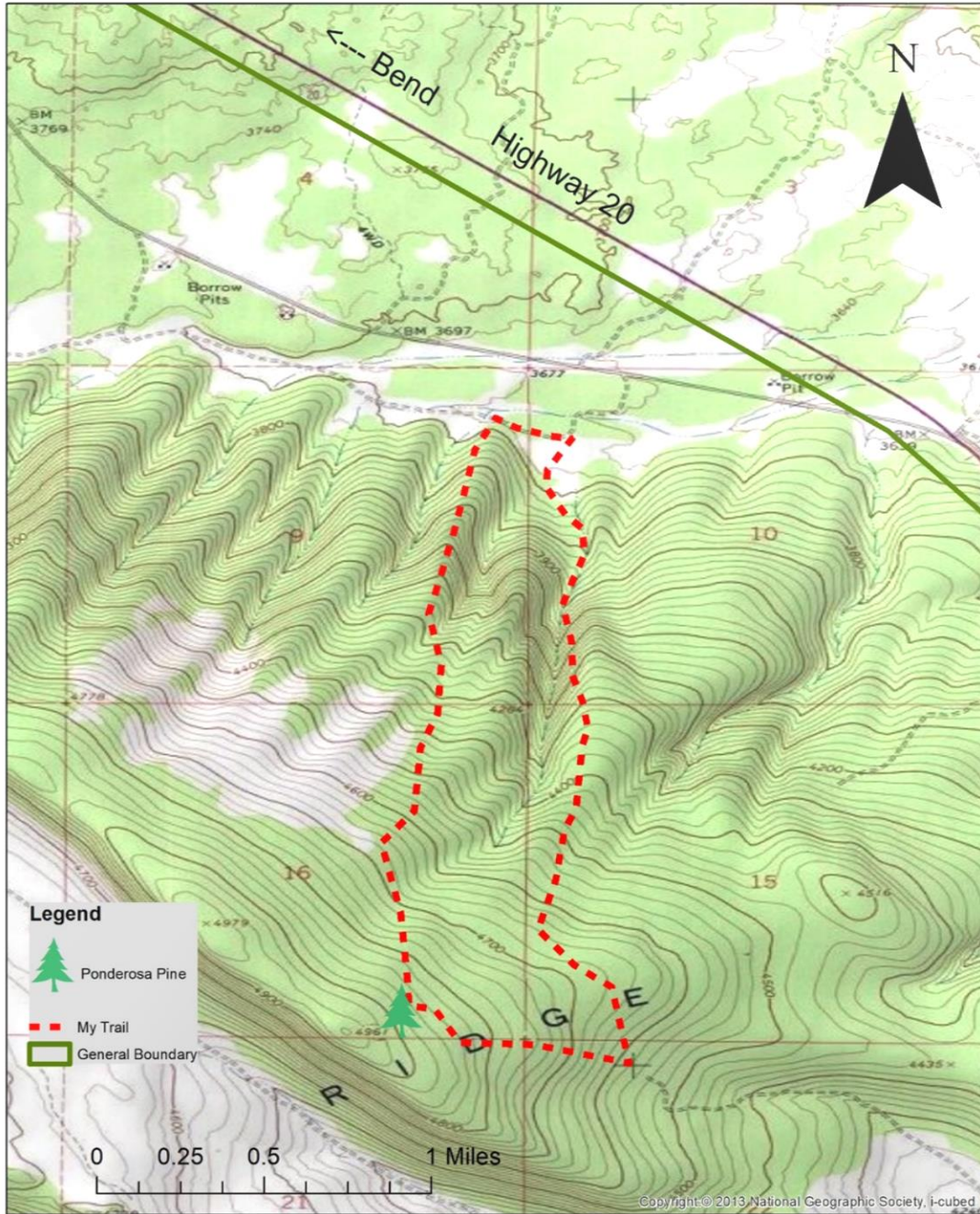
The steep Sandy Canyon Trail



The Rickard Trailhead leads to a small group of trails



My Trail in Horse Ridge Recreation Area



High Desert Special Recreation Management Area Horse Ridge Recreation Area

Not all trails are depicted on this map. BLM intends to re-route some trails where there are conflicts with wildlife, plants, and other resources.

Need hi-clearance and AWD for green "motorized" roads

* No parking at these access points

**High Desert Special Recreation Management Area
Horse Ridge Recreation Area**

A Place Apart
Managed by the Prineville District of the Bureau of Land Management, this 40 square mile region of lava and juniper, located 25 miles SE of Bend, is situated by the Cascade National Forest to the south, the Oregon Badlands Wilderness to the north, Dry River Canyon to the northeast and rural residential communities to the northwest.

Natural History
The area includes fascinating landforms, rare sage, a variety of prominent tall boulders, rugged high-altitude volcanic features (e.g. and the historic live area, generally but not rocky upper area located to the northwest. Horse Ridge rises to an elevation of approximately 5,100 feet and includes an unpaired, 800-acre Research Natural Area established in 1987 to study the area for its significant plant communities. The adjacent live area has two mature cedar trees, a result of the 1966 fire which burned 21,000 acres and damaged or destroyed 46 homes. Today, the effects of the fire are visible in the dense shrubs and rubber groves that make up the live area's regrowth.

Wildlife
The area's high elevation woodland and open shrub-steppe habitats in this area provide important habitat for wildlife, such as elk, mule deer, pronghorn, golden eagles, and bald eagles. Mountain lions, bobcats and ground sloth signs. Some of the oldest known western prairie trees are found on the slopes of Horse Ridge.

Recreation
Motor vehicles are only permitted on signed, designated roads. Four-wheelers, bicycles and


Motorists may use designated roads, as well as existing routes, to travel their country. Late fall through early spring is the most popular time period for recreation in the area as soil conditions provide for better and less resource damage. Motorist riding opportunities are available mostly in the Milliken valley and east fork road systems. The long-term goals for the Horse Ridge Recreation Area include providing a trail system with emphasis on a variety of non-motorized trail use while improving habitat conditions and reducing routes outside of the Research Natural Area.

Please help protect Horse Ridge and other areas by following these rules and regulations:


- Cross country travel by motor vehicles is illegal. They are limited to the designated road system.
- On the trail, motor vehicles yield to non-motorists, mountain bikers yield to all other users.
- Horse Ridge program is closed to firearm discharge unless legally hunting (see map for target shooting closure areas).
- Leave gates as you find them, either open or closed.
- Request private property by staying on public lands.



**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
Bureau of Land Management**

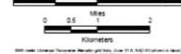


PRINEVILLE DISTRICT
3050 NE Third Street, Prineville, OR 97754
Phone: 541-416-6700



Legend

- Trailheads
- Domestic Visitor
- Information Kiosk
- OHV Staging Area
- Designated Motorized Roads
- Horse Ridge Recreation Area Non-Motorized Routes
- Other Non-Motorized Trails
- Highways
- Roads
- OHV Trails
- Fences
- Closed to All Firearm Discharge Unless Legally Hunting
- Horse Ridge Recreation Area
- Oregon Badlands Wilderness
- Administrated Lands
- Bureau of Land Management
- Cascade National Forest
- State of Oregon
- Private



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BLM Map