

United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Forest  
Service

NEZ PERCE AND BITTERROOT FORESTS

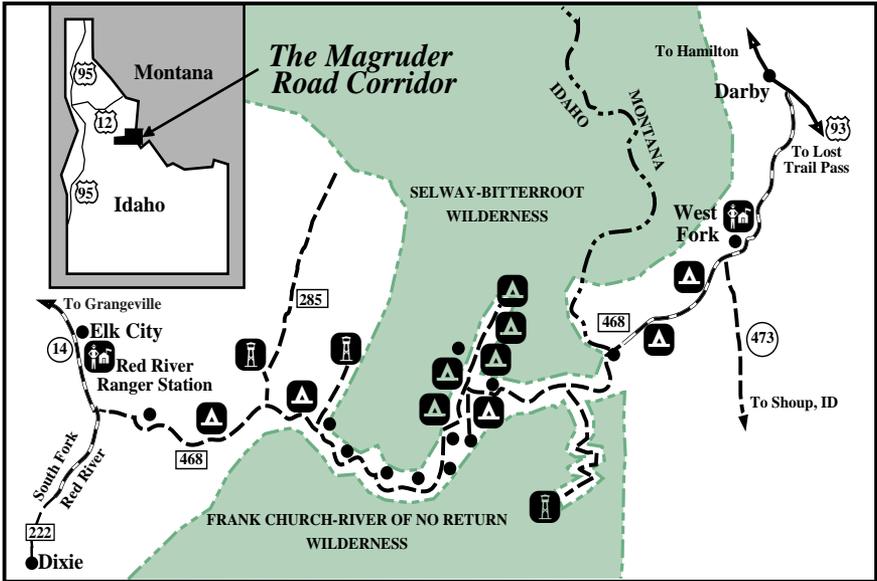


# MAGRUDER ROAD CORRIDOR



*Vista at Dry Saddle*

A guide to the  
historic Magruder Road



## Introduction

The 101-mile primitive Magruder Corridor Road winds through a vast undeveloped area, offering solitude and pristine beauty as well as expansive mountain views.

The landscape is much the same as when the Nez Perce Indians and other early travelers crossed the area.

The road has changed little since its construction by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in the 1930s. It has also been known as the Southern Nez Perce Trail, Elk City to Darby Road, Montana Road and the Parker Trail.

## Wilderness

The corridor was created in 1980 when the Central Idaho Wilderness Act was passed, leaving a unique road that enables a traveler to drive between two wildernesses: the

1.2- million-acre Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness to the north, and the 2.3-million-acre Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness to the south. Together, they represent the largest unroaded block of land in the lower 48 states and are nearly twice as large as the combined states of Delaware and Rhode Island.

To help safeguard the natural-ness of wilderness, practice “leave no trace” techniques to ensure the country you came to enjoy will remain intact for future generations. Another safeguard is the use of certified weed-seed-free products. As of January 1, 1996, all forage or mulch used on national forest lands in Idaho and Montana must be noxious weed-seed-free.

Remember the use of motorized or mechanized equipment or vehicles is not permitted in a designated wilderness.

## Area Access

The Magruder Road, Forest Road #468, is mostly unimproved. The west end intersects Forest Road #222, 0.3 mile south of the old Red River Ranger Station (65 miles east of Grangeville, Idaho). The east end is 0.8 mile south of West Fork Ranger Station (18 miles southwest of Darby, Montana).

## Road Conditions

This primitive one-lane road is rough, steep and winding, with few turnouts for passing oncoming vehicles. It is suitable for high clearance vehicles, pickup trucks, motorcycles and mountain bikes. The Forest Service does not recommend towing trailers because there are several hairpin turns along the route. Motor homes with low clearance should not travel the road.

Snow begins to fall in early October and persists into July; however, snowstorms are possible at any time. Four-wheel-drive is recommended when the road is snow covered or muddy.

Remember you are traveling through an extensive undeveloped area with no services for 117 miles. Be sure you start with a vehicle in good operating condition, a full tank of gas and a spare tire. At all times be alert for other traffic, washouts, fallen trees and other debris on the road.

The road is busiest during the Idaho hunting season: mid-September through mid-November.

## Travel Time

Travel time varies, but it takes eight to ten hours to travel from Red River to Darby without rest stops. The average speed will be 12-15 miles per hour. A two-day trip is ideal with an overnight stay at one of the dispersed or primitive campsite locations.

Take your time, absorb the solitude and enjoy the remoteness far from the hassles of crowded highways.

## Camping

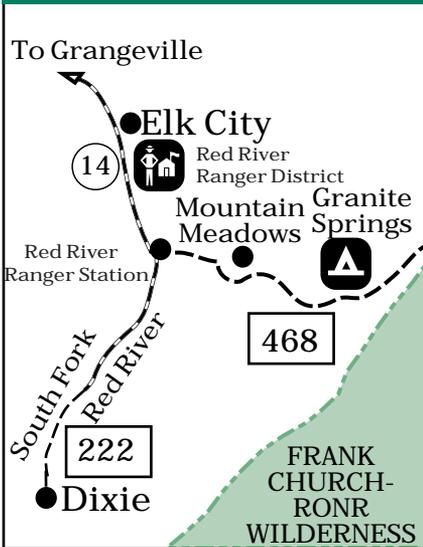
When camping at primitive locations, please follow these guidelines:

- *Choose a site 200 feet from trails and water.*
- *Use existing fire grates and fire rings when building campfires.*
- *When going to the bathroom, do as a cat: dig a hole and bury human waste. Maintain a distance of 200 feet from water and trails.*
- *Make sure your campfire is dead out when you leave.*
- *Pack out all trash, both yours and that of others.*
- *Leave no trace of your stay.*

## Drinking Water

Water from springs, lakes, ponds and streams should not be consumed without proper treatment (boiling for more than five minutes or using a water filter) as giardia could be present. It is a good idea to carry extra water.

# Red River Ranger Station to Granite Springs



Visitors will find the Mountain Meadows campsite in this vicinity.

At 14-Mile Tree, the trailhead begins for Trails 501 and 580, which lead into the Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness. There is an information board, registration box and toilet. Stock facilities include a feeding rack and hitching rails.

## *Granite Springs Campground*

Granite Springs Campground lies on both sides of the road. It has drinking water, pit toilets, picnic tables, stock facilities and water for stock.

## *Elk City Ranger Station*

Visitors are encouraged to stop at the Elk City Ranger Station on the Red River Ranger District in Elk City and ask questions about maps, road conditions, weather and any other concerns. After office hours, visitors can obtain limited information at an interpretive sign at the old Red River Ranger Station (now closed) that briefly describes the Nez Perce Trail. It is located just south of the ranger station along with an RV dump station. Magruder Road #468 begins on the left side of Road #222. The first eight miles are a steady climb. Oregon Butte Lookout and Buffalo Hump are visible to the west.

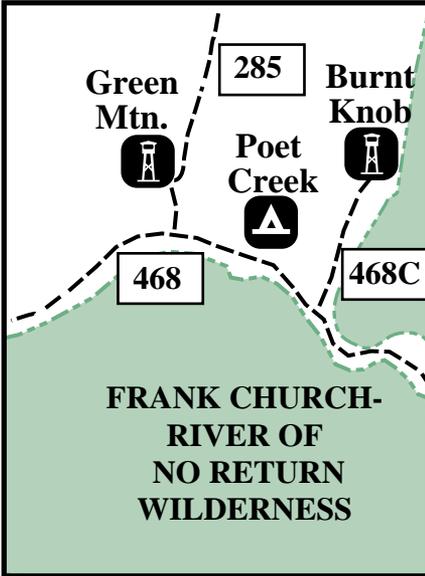
## *Mountain Meadows*

The headwaters of Meadow Creek lie directly north of the road.



The Southern Nez Perce Trail parallels a portion of the Magruder Corridor Road. The Nez Perce Indians found a practical hunting/gathering route that followed the South Fork of the Clearwater River to the rolling country and lush meadows near Elk City and the upper Red River drainage. The trail went south of the extremely difficult terrain of the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness, and also avoided the more rugged portion of the deep, narrow Salmon River canyon.

## Elk Mountain Road to Burnt Knob Lookout



### *Elk Mountain Road #285*

The road continues to climb from the Granite Springs Campground. Elk Mountain Road #285 branches to the northeast, a driveable 4-miles to the Green Mountain Lookout, with views of the Red River drainage. From the #285 junction, the Magruder Road winds steeply down into Bargamin Creek. Drive slowly and watch for brakes heating up.

### *Poet Creek Campground*

Poet Creek Campground lies north of the Magruder Road. It has four camping units with tables, fireplaces, parking spurs, and pit toilets. There is no developed water source. Because stock is not permitted in the campground, four mangers are located south of the road.

Here in the Magruder Corridor and adjacent wildernesses, diverse plant communities fill habitat needs for a variety of mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibians.

Large mammals include black bear, sheep, goats and four deer family members - whitetail and mule deer, elk and moose. Deer are the most commonly seen animals. There are many smaller mammals, such as badger, wolverine, pine marten, mink and weasels, but count yourself lucky if you see

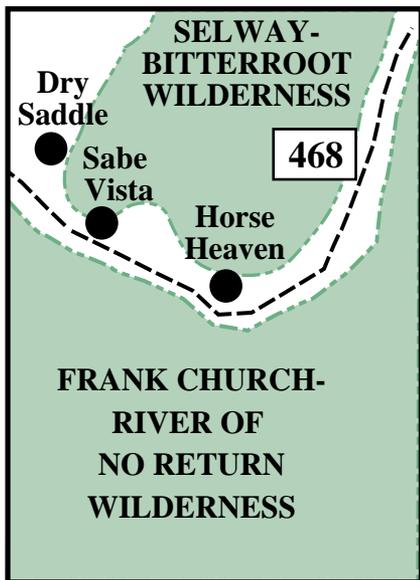


one. However, you'll see ground squirrels, golden-mantle squirrels, red squirrels and two kinds of chipmunks. You can differentiate between chipmunks and golden-mantle squirrels, as the chipmunk's white stripes extend onto its head. Be alert while traveling to increase your chances of seeing wildlife.

### *Burnt Knob Lookout Road*

From Poet Creek Campground, the road climbs steeply for eight miles with a few sharp curves. Burnt Knob #468-C branches off to the north. This road is recommended for 4-wheel-drive only and ends at Burnt Knob Lookout. Three Prong Trail #539, which starts in the saddle below the lookout, accesses McArthur, Stillman and Burnt Knob lakes.

## Dry Saddle Trailhead to Horse Heaven Saddle



### *Dry Saddle Trailhead*

Dry Saddle Trailhead lies both north and south of the road and has pit toilets, a loading ramp and graveled parking area. Elevation at the trailhead is 7920 feet. It provides access to many high mountain lakes along Sheep Hill Trail #575. It is a ten-mile hike to Sheep Hill fire lookout tower.



### *Sabe Vista*

From Dry Saddle, the rough and winding road drops down to Sabe Saddle and then climbs back up again to Sabe Vista, which offers many scenic views. Elevation is 7490 feet at the vista. This portion of the road is very narrow and sometimes very steep. There are few places to pass another vehicle.

A large burn, which was part of the Ladder Creek Fire complex, is visible at Sabe Vista. In 1988, three lightning strikes started three different fires, which eventually merged into one fire. Nearly 70,000 acres were burned in three National Forests (Nez Perce, Bitterroot and Payette). Fire is a natural force which rejuvenates the environment.

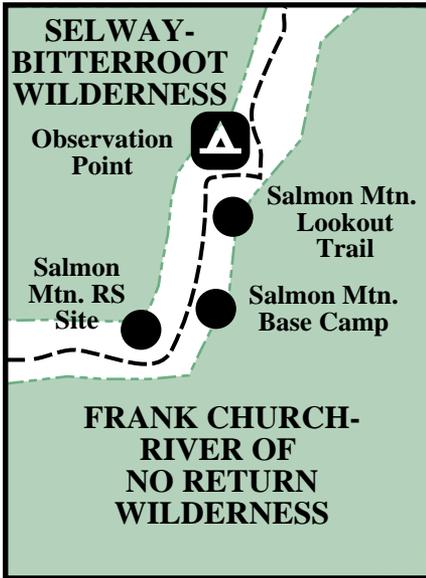
### *Horse Heaven Saddle*

Horse Heaven is named for its lush grazing grasses. Elevation at the saddle is 7070 feet.

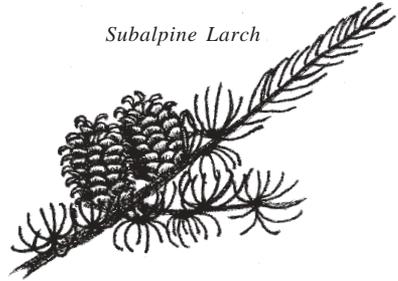
Horse Heaven Cabin was built in 1939 at a CCC Camp near Darby, MT. It was then disassembled and transported more than 60 miles west where it once functioned as a firefighter's cabin.

The cabin is south of the road on the spur road marked for trail #028. The one-room log cabin is presently on the Forest Service cabin rental program and will accommodate four people. Reservations and information is available at the West Fork Ranger Station.

## Salmon Mountain Area to Observation Point



*Subalpine Larch*



"Ribbon forests" are visible on the slopes in this area. These are elongated narrow forest strips growing perpendicular to prevailing wind directions and alternating with narrow bands of moist-wet subalpine meadows called "snow glades."

Also, you can find good examples of "ghost" trees on the mountain. These whitebark pines were killed by a combination of mountain pine beetle and blister rust attacks. They became bleached from the summer sun, giving them a ghost-white appearance.

Near the peak of the mountain are "banner" or "flag" trees and stunted trees called "krummholz," which are often hundreds of years old and only two feet high.

### *Observation Point*

Observation Point Campground has nice camping spots and toilets.

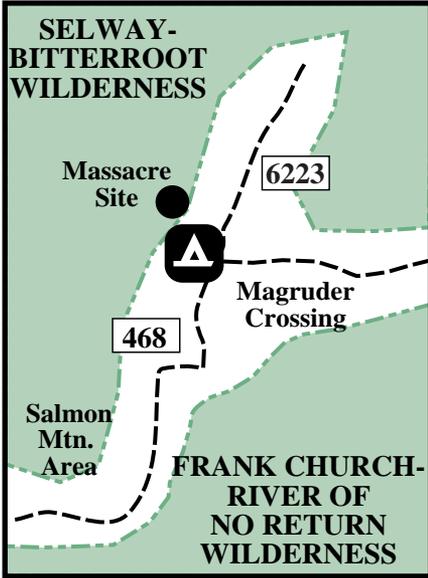
The elevation is 7620 feet and visitors can view the southern portion of the Bitterroot Mountain Range, especially El Capitan. The point also offers breathtaking vistas of subalpine/alpine wilderness.

### *Salmon Mountain Area*

The Old Salmon Mountain Ranger Station site was established in 1911. Nearby is the Salmon Mountain base camp, a very popular trailhead during hunting season. It has stock facilities. A one-mile trail leads to the Salmon Mountain lookout tower which is staffed by volunteers during fire season. The elevation is 8944 feet. Mountain goats are often seen on the rocky crags and talus slopes of Salmon Mountain.

This area is one of the few places in America where you can see the subalpine larch. The larch is the only deciduous coniferous tree, meaning that its needles turn yellow and drop off in the fall.

# Magruder Crossing



## *Lloyd Magruder*

Gold was discovered near Pierce, Idaho, in 1861 and near Bannack, Montana, in 1862. Many miners and traders used the Southern Nez Perce Trail as the most direct route from Elk City, Idaho, to Bannack or Virginia City, Montana.

In 1863 Lloyd Magruder and companions were returning along this route from Virginia City after making a handsome profit of gold dust from selling supplies to miners. Four other travelers joined the Magruder group. A few days later, the travelers attacked, murdered and robbed Magruder and his companions in the dark of the night. The murderers burned and buried the evidence of their crime and fled to San Francisco with their stolen booty. Hill Beachy, Magruder's friend, pursued the murderers and brought them back to stand trial in Lewiston, Idaho. The trial resulted in the first legal hanging in the Idaho Territory.

Lloyd Magruder had been a successful California merchant. He was a well respected man and had many friends. Prior to his ill-fated trip, he had agreed to represent the Idaho Territory in Congress.

As a result of this event, many places bear the name "Magruder," among them the road on which you are traveling.

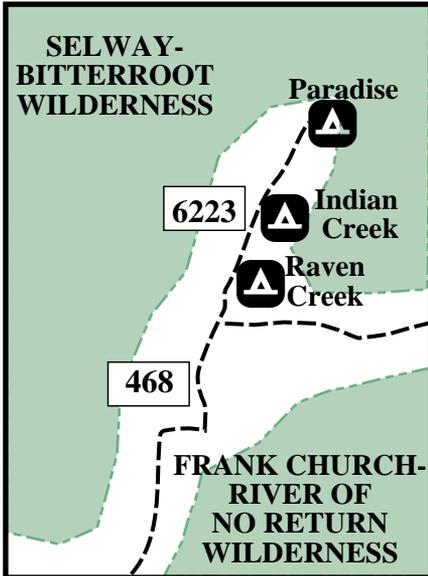
## *Magruder Crossing Bridge*

The only place in the upper Selway drainage you can drive across the Selway River is at Magruder crossing. This steel pony-truss bridge was built by CCC's in 1935.

The campground has picnic tables, a toilet, stock facilities and water for stock.



## Paradise Road to Paradise



### *Paradise Road #6223*

Travellers on this narrow one-lane road will enjoy a pleasant 12-mile drive along the Wild and Scenic Selway River. The river flows through a deep, beautiful canyon with some stands of western red cedar along its banks. There is a pack bridge for the trail to Spot Mountain Lookout. Three campgrounds are available along the road: Raven Creek, Indian Creek and Paradise. The road ends at Paradise Campground.

### *Indian Creek Hatchery*

The Indian Creek hatching channel was constructed in 1964 so that spring chinook salmon eggs could be planted in the Selway River drainage. Fish had been unable to reach the Selway

since the construction of the Lewiston Dam in 1929.

A total of approximately two million eggs were planted each year from 1965 to 1981 and again in 1985. In the spring the emerging fry were trapped and distributed in the upper Selway by vehicle, stock and aircraft. This supplemented the naturally spawning chinook salmon in the Selway River. Chinook salmon are found throughout the Selway River, however, they are usually seen during peak spawning activity in late August and early September.

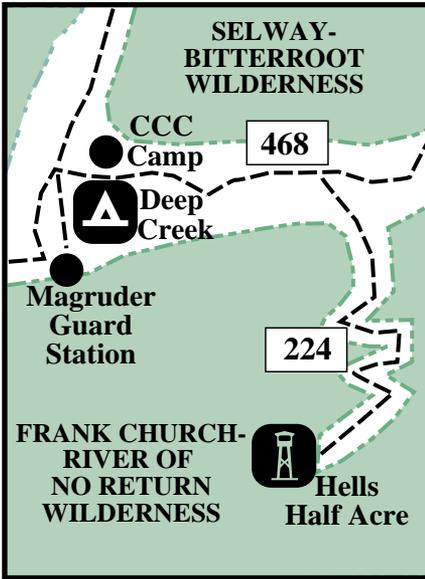
### *Paradise*

The elevation at Paradise is 3067 feet. A launch site for river rafting is located near the end of Paradise Road. Permits are required from May 15 to July 31 to float the 47-mile section of the Selway River from Paradise to Selway Falls. Information can be obtained from the West Fork Ranger Station.

Paradise Campground is 1/4 mile up White Cap Creek road. The campground has eleven sites, with toilets, picnic tables, stock facilities and meat racks. This is a very heavily used trailhead during hunting season.

A Forest Service administrative site is adjacent to the Paradise Campground with a cabin, barn and corrals.

## Magruder Guard Station to Hells Half Acre



The office/residence and ranger's house were built by Ole Tangen, a Forest Service employee. The CCC constructed the barn, corral and woodshed.

The station is eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. The structures are excellent examples of rustic log construction and interior craftsmanship.

### *Deep Creek Bridge*

The Deep Creek bridge is a beautiful example of arched native cut-stone construction. It was built by Lithuanian stone masons who were assisted by CCC enrollees in the 1930's.

### *Magruder Guard Station*

The Magruder Guard Station is located 1/2 mile from Road #468. The elevation is 4100 feet. Potable water is available here, but no other services are available at this remote station. A "host" may be here during summer months to offer information to visitors.

After the widespread forest fires of 1910 and 1919, the Forest Service built many low-standard roads into the area. The road along Deep Creek was first surveyed in 1919-1920 and the road was constructed to the newly established tent camp known as Deep Creek Ranger Station. The name was later changed to Magruder.

The CCC improved the original road in 1936 and finished constructing a one-lane road from the station to Elk City.

### *Deep Creek Campground*

The campground has three sites with picnic tables, toilets and stock facilities.

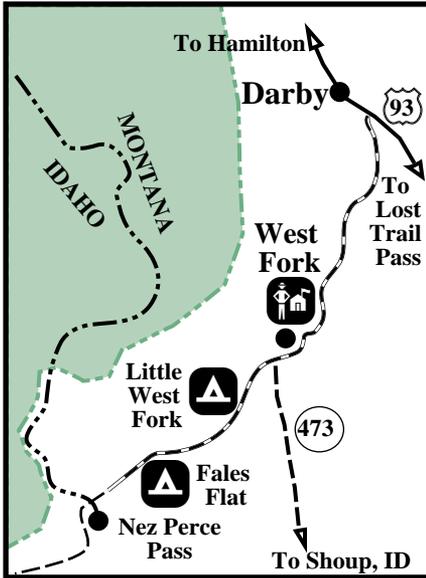
### *CCC Camp*

This was a spike camp used by the CCC enrollees during construction of the road. The stone water fountain, an incinerator and several rock foundations, remnants of the camp, are still visible along both sides of Deep Creek.

### *Hells Half Acre Road #224*

The road to Hells Half Acre Lookout is 11 miles long and extremely steep, narrow and rocky. The lookout is staffed during fire season. The West Fork and Red River Districts can contact the tower by radio for permission to visit.

## Nez Perce Pass to West Fork Ranger Station



located at the pass. Please do not park on the landing zone.

### *Fales Flat Campground*

This campground is named for Wesley Fales, a trapper, woodsman and early Forest Service employee, who located a homestead on the flat around 1914. He built a cabin there which burned about 1940. Since he did not complete the patent process on his homestead, the entry was cancelled in June, 1929. Fales Flat was also the site of a CCC camp in 1933.

Numerous scarred ponderosa pine trees are visible throughout the campground and hillsides to the north. The sweet cambium beneath the trees' bark was an important food for the Salish and Nez Perce people who passed through this area.

### *Little West Fork Campground*

The elevation is 4580 feet. Segments of the original CCC road are often visible about 25 feet north of the present day road. Remnants of the historic bridges are visible at Watchtower Creek and Little West Fork Creek. In the winter, this is a parking lot for snowmobilers.

### *West Fork Ranger Station*

Visitors are encouraged to stop and ask questions about maps, road conditions, weather and any other concerns.

### *Paved Road*

Before the 1980 Central Idaho Wilderness Act was passed, some of the area was prepared for timber sales. This 14-mile section of the road was paved in the 1970's in anticipation of those sales. If you are hiking in the area, you may notice trees marked for cutting. Timber harvest is not allowed in designated wilderness areas.

### *Nez Perce Pass*

The elevation at Nez Perce Pass is 6598 feet. An information board at the pass interprets the history of the area and provides visitors with general information about this spectacular area. There is a large parking area, toilet and stock facilities.

A helicopter landing site is

## For More Information

### Nez Perce National Forest

Route 2, Box 475

Grangeville, ID 83530

(208) 983-1950 \*TTY (208) 983-2280

### Red River Ranger District

Elk City Ranger Station

HC01, Box 416

Elk City, ID 83525

(208) 842-2245

### Bitterroot National Forest

1801 North 1st Street

Hamilton, MT 59840

(406) 363-7100 \*TTY (406) 363-7116

### West Fork Ranger District

6735 West Fork Road

Darby, MT 59829

(406) 821-3269

**Website:** [www.fs.fed.us/r1/nezperce](http://www.fs.fed.us/r1/nezperce)

\*Telephone for Hearing Impaired



*Arrowleaf Balsamroot000*

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