



## **COAL MESA TRAIL # 451 → 15 MILES ONE WAY**

**DIFFICULTY:** More Difficult.

**SEASON OF USE:** Summer and fall.

**ELEVATION GAIN:** Soap Creek Campground is at 7,740'. Bonfisk Peak is at 11,629'. Intersection with Rainbow Lake Trail #449 is at 10,080'.

**USGS MAPS:** Little Soap Park, Big Soap Park, West Elk Peak

**ACCESS:** From Gunnison, travel west on US Highway 50 for approximately 25 miles to the intersection with CO Highway 92. Travel west on CO Hwy 92 for 1 mile (over Blue Mesa Dam). Once across the dam, turn east onto Soap Creek Road #721 and travel 9 miles to Soap Creek Campground and Trailhead. The trailhead is located near the south end of the campground.

### **NARRATIVE:**

The trail crosses Soap Creek (via a bridge) and enters the West Elk Wilderness about  $\frac{1}{2}$  miles from the trailhead. After approximately 1.5 miles, the trail forks and the right fork follows Coal Creek. They eventually reconnect after roughly 2.5 miles. The trail climbs to a ridge that it then follows for a distance, offering excellent views. The trail gains 3,889 feet in elevation from the trailhead to Bonfisk Peak (11,629 feet), and then drops 1,829 feet to West Elk Creek. The descent from the ridge into West Elk Creek is very steep. The trail eventually intersects with Coal Creek Trail #452, Rainbow Lake Trail #449, and Sun Park Trail #444. Not all intersections are signed, so trail users are advised to travel with an adequate map; always a good backcountry practice.

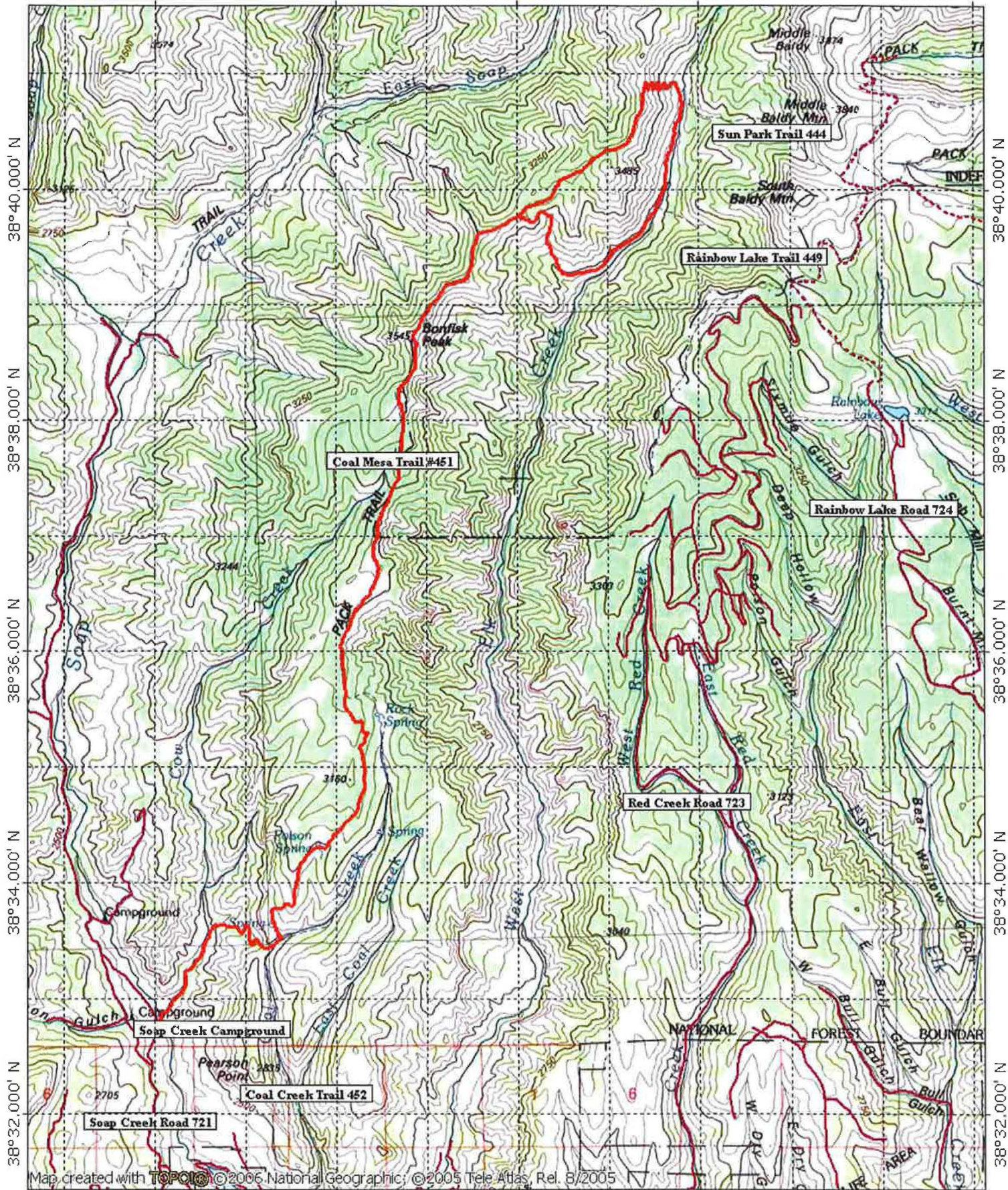
**CONSIDERATIONS:** A horse ramp and corral are available adjacent to Soap Creek Campground. This trail is within the West Elk Wilderness and encounters with other hikers and horseback riders are possible, but rare.



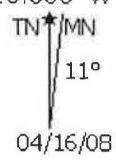
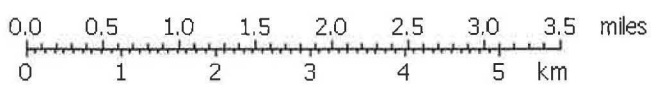


# Coal Mesa Trail #451

107°19.000' W 107°17.000' W 107°15.000' W 107°13.000' W WGS84 107°10.000' W



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