

## **Gold Creek Trail #152**

**Length:** 5.6 miles

**Use:** Receives light use

**Difficulty:** Moderate first 3 miles. Difficult next 2.5. Most difficult last mile to pass.

**Recommended Season:** Mid-June to November

**USGS Maps:** Maurice Mountain Quad

**Trail Beginning:** On Pioneers Mountain Scenic Byway #73 at the Lost Meadows Trailhead 1/2 south of Gold Creek and the Maurice Cemetery

**Trail Ending:** Junction with Canyon Creek Trail #92, 3/4-mile north of Lake Abundance

**Access:** Via Pioneer Mountains Scenic Byway #73 and Highway #43

### **Attractions and Considerations**

There is a graveled parking area large enough for stock trailers, a stock unloading ramp, hitch rails and a toilet at the trailhead. The trail may be difficult for stock travel the last 1 mile where it climbs out of Gold Creek to the Pass between Gold Creek and Canyon Creek. Gold Creek Trail receives low use except during the fall hunting seasons when use is moderate. The trail is maintained each year, however, in many places, particularly in meadow areas, the trail is overgrown and easy to lose. Cattle graze in the lower portion of Gold Creek and the trails created by cows can be confused with the foot trail. Trail blazes are marked but sometimes tricky to see. The easiest clue to the trails whereabouts in these vague sections is to keep following along the north side of Gold Creek. The trail should reappear soon. The trail provides access to Crescent Lake and Lake Abundance via its junction with Canyon Creek Trail #92 both lakes have ample fish populations and nice views. Existing campsites are at both lakes. Motorized use of this trail is restricted one mile east of the trailhead.

### **Narrative**

The trail begins as a gentle walk from the trailhead in a side drainage of Gold Creek. The trail crosses a small spring creek on a puncheon bridge and follows a small drainage heading east and northeast approximately 1/2 mile until it crosses main Gold Creek. The crossing is a wide ford for stock and a foot log for foot travel. Just across Gold Creek it junctions with Trail #140 that heads north to Moose Creek, Boulder Creek, fourth-of-July Creek and Sheep creek. East of this junction it travels along the edge of lodgepole pine forest and the Gold Creek valley bottom. The scenery is beautiful, dry meadowlands with white water hemlock and yellow cinquefoil flowers in the valley bottom and sagebrush on the side hills. As the trail continues on, it begins to climb sharply in some places, leveling out again 3 miles in, then after the junction with Trail #269 the trail climbs up on the sideslopes on the north side of Gold Creek. From here it is easy to look down on the creek and see why the creek gets its name, having the distinctive, bright gold color. Also, the higher mountains come into view, mostly dry, eroded sandstone geologic formations. At the start of the last mile, the trail leads away to the north and climbs steeply up the side of the mountain. This is the most difficult portion of the walk as the trail switchbacks up the steeply sloped mountainside. The trail passes through white-bark pine and subalpine fir forest up to the top of the mountain pass. From here, a breathtaking view awaits the weary hiker as the Gold Creek Valley sweeps out back to the west and the

Canyon Creek Valley opens up to view to the east. One-half mile later the trail joins with Trail #92.

For more information, contact the Wise River Ranger District.