

Pettengill Creek Trail #245

Length: 14 miles

Use: Light during the summer. Moderate during the fall hunting season.

Difficulty: Moderate

Recommended Season: Mid-June to early November

USGS Maps: Stine Mountain, Shaw Mountain, Proposal Rock, Stewart Mountain, and Odell Mountain.

Trail Beginning: End of Pettengill Road #186 south of Grouse Creek

Trail Ending: Junction with Pioneer Loop Trail #750 west of Schweinegar Lake

Access: Via Pettengill Road #186, Pioneer Mountains Scenic Byway #73, and Highway #43

Attractions and Considerations

There is an undeveloped parking area and bank type stock ramp on Pettengill Road at the intersection with the Pettengill Jeep Trail. The first four miles of this trail, to Cow Creek, is a jeep trail and then it narrows down to a stock trail beyond that. There are two stock camping areas 3-1/2 and 4 miles in, and one more ten miles in on the trail just above Demijohn Creek. Other small campsites are also scattered along the trail but they are limited. It is possible to reach Sand Lake by following the Sand Creek way trail. The trail is signed, however, it is not maintained and is a steep, rocky trail. This trail is still used by an outfitter who has a camp at Sand Lake. It is not recommended to use stock on this trail. The best way to reach Sand Lake using stock is to follow Pettengill Creek Trail to its junction with the Pioneer Loop Trail #750, then heading west to Baldy and Sand Lakes, or south to Schweinegar, Lake of the Woods and Odell Lake. The trail is open to motorcycles and ATV at this time but receives little except in lower Pettengill Creek below Cow Creek.

Narrative

The trail begins in a dry lodgepole pine forest area and quickly opens up into the Pettengill Creek meadows. The jeep road is clear and easy walking. It runs adjacent to the meadow for approximately 2-1/2 miles, providing beautiful views of the meadow area and the mountains in the background. The jeep trail then reenters the woods for 3/4-mile and opens again into meadowland for another 1-1/2 miles. The land is dry in this area with lots of sagebrush. At the end of this meadow, the trail passes through two stock camps and two gates. Beyond this point the trail becomes a stock trail for the rest of the way to the Pioneer Loop Trail junction. However, motorized use by ATVs is widening the trail for much of its length. The forest becomes more lush as it slowly continues upward alongside Pettengill Creek the entire way. There are some muddy and boggy areas above the Copper Creek Trail junction, but passable by foot and stock. In areas where the trail passes through meadows the trail becomes vague and it is easy to lose; however, it is easy to find again as the trail follows the creek so consistently. The trail climbs out of the valley bottom during the last three miles and crosses to the east side of the valley where a new trail was constructed in 1995. In order to reach the Sand Creek Way Trail stay on the old Pettengill trail where the new trail crosses Pettengill Creek and follow the old trail to where it crosses Sand Creek. The way trail is on the south side of the creek crossing. The new trail passes through whitebark pine, lodgepole pine and subalpine fir and lush grasses and wildflowers.

For more information, contact the Wise River Ranger District.