



United States Department of Agriculture  
Forest Service



PACIFIC SOUTHWEST REGION

*Restoring, Enhancing and Sustaining Forests in California, Hawaii and the Pacific Islands*

Sierra National Forest

# SWAMP OHV ROUTE

## High Sierra Ranger District

**DIFFICULTY RATING:** Most Difficult.

For experienced drivers. Short wheel base vehicles recommended only, from Exchequer Meadow to Hatch Lake trail junction.

The Swamp Lake OHV Route may be reached from either Willow Meadow or Exchequer Meadow. This description starts at the east near Exchequer Meadow and ends near Willow Meadow west of Dinkey Creek.

**DIRECTIONS TO SWAMP OHV ROUTE**

To locate the beginning of the route take McKinley Grove Road east from Dinkey Creek for 2.5 miles. The Swamp Lake OHV sign should be visible. Follow this graded, oil and gravel road for three miles. At the fork, turn left and drive 1.1 miles until it forks again. Take the left fork again for 0.8 miles to the trailhead gate on the right.

**SWAMP ROUTE**

The route is a low-standard logging road for the first mile. Then it deteriorates into a four wheel drive road as it climbs higher up the mountain.

There are stretches that are rough for trail bikes, negotiating over and around numerous large boulders. Traveling in 4WD and granny gear, new vistas begin to appear through the trees. The awesome canyons of the Kings River can be seen to the south. To the east across Ruby Creek the imposing, blocky granite summit of 10,218 foot Nelson Mountain dominates the scene.

At the 3.5 mile mark there are two small campsites and the hiking trail to Hatch Lake. Near one of the campsites is a small spring of water which

supports a natural garden of wildflowers. Start at the campsite on the south side of the OHV route for an easy 20 minute hike to Hatch Lake. The fishing at Hatch Lake is surprisingly good because few people take the time or effort to hike.

Beyond the trail to Hatch Lake, the route climbs a few steep switchbacks and tops a 9,300 foot ridge, revealing the headwaters of Dinkey Creek. Once across the pass, clear views of the LeConte Divide and 13,568 foot Mt. Goddard define the distant horizon. The road switchbacks down the shaded north side of the ridge, dropping 600 feet in elevation in about a mile.

After crossing a fork of Dinkey Creek, take the route to the left to avoid the private property at Mud Lakes. From this point on the route becomes a short wheel base road and is very difficult. Only experienced drivers with short wheel based vehicles should attempt to go any farther. Trail bike riders should walk the road before deciding whether to proceed. The road starts to climb steeply and is very rocky. After about 1.5 miles of steep grade, it levels off for the short distance to Grouse Lake. You may want to try your hand at fishing here.

The route gains elevation quickly on its way to the ridge. Park vehicles at the top of the 9,600 foot pass and take in the grand vistas on foot where panoramic views of the surrounding lakes, meadows, and peaks can be seen.

Swamp Lake is only a short half mile downhill from the OHV route in a large, bowl-like depression. The name “Swamp” does little justice to the beauty of this lake.



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The route winds its way around Swamp Lake past a single campsite beside a Forest Service cabin (once used by snow surveyors), then proceeds down a series of very steep and narrow switchbacks. A small miscalculation may turn into a costly mistake.

Soon Miningtown Meadow will be in view and then Dinkey Creek, which will end the rough section of road. Less than a mile is the gate and turn-off to the Willow Meadow Trailhead into the Dinkey Lakes Wilderness. The OHV route turns into a rough, passenger car road and gently winds its remaining two miles to the gate at the west end of the OHV route where it intersects with a main logging road (9S10).

## **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

### **High Sierra Ranger District**

P.O. Box 559  
Prather, CA 93651  
559-855-5355  
(TDD) 559-855-5367

### **Dinkey Creek Ranger Station**

559-841-3404 (Summer Only)

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