



Bitterroot National Forest Potential Field Trip Sites



Below are just a few of the sites on the forest that could be used for educational field trips. Included is a brief description of the site, as well as, the types of activities that could occur at the site. If you would like assistance with a field trip, please contact **Janeen Curtis at (406) 381-2951 or janeen_rcd@yahoo.com**

Northern Bitterroot Valley

Bass Creek/Charles Waters Nature Trail/Larry Creek Fire Ecology Trail

Location: Five miles north of Stevensville turn west on Bass Creek Rd. Continue west on Bass Creek Rd. for approximately two miles to the site.

Activities: The ½ mile Charles Waters Nature trail provides access to two different habitat types, dry ponderosa pine and a cool moist old growth forest. The Larry Creek Fire Ecology Trail discusses the forest following a 1994 prescribed burn and has a 17 station, 2½ mile interpretive trail discussing the effects of fire and the exclusion of fire on the forest and its inhabitants. Bass Creek can be utilized for studies on riparian ecosystems, as well.

Facilities: The site has a large parking area, picnic area, fitness trail, and restroom facilities. Charles Waters Campground has an accessible picnic area and bathroom facility.

Willoughby Environmental Education Area (#2)

Location: Turn east on Bell Crossing, which is 2 miles north of Victor. Continue east for approximately 8 miles on Bell Crossing, Willoughby, and South Sunset Roads. Follow the brown signs with a hiker on them to get to the site.

Activities: The area contains a variety of habitats, dry sagebrush, ponderosa pine forest, and a riparian area. A one-mile interpretive nature trail travels through these habitat types and is guided by a 12 site interpretive brochure.

Facilities: There is an accessible picnic shelter with cooking grills and an accessible toilet facility. There is a large parking area.

Mid Bitterroot Valley

Cow Creek/Sheafman Creek Demonstration Area (#3)

Location: Travel north on Highway 93 from Hamilton for approximately 4 miles. At the stop light (Woodside cut-off) turn west onto Dutch Hill Road toward Pinesdale. Travel approximately 3 1/2 miles along this road to a USFS sign

indicating Sheafman Creek Trail. Turn west at this sign and travel one mile on a gravel road to a large pull out area for parking, which is just before a USFS gate.

Activities: This site is an area that burned very hot during the fires of 2000. The USFS implemented various fuels treatments following the fires. The community and USFS personnel placed numerous straw bales and implemented other rehabilitation efforts to protect the soils in the area. Teachers can discuss fire ecology, fuel level reduction and rehabilitation techniques used following fire. The site might also be desirable for establishing long-term monitoring plots for classroom analysis.

Facilities: There are no bathroom facilities at the site. The parking area can accommodate 8-10 cars. A large bus may have difficulty turning around at the site.

Mill Creek Trail (#4)

Location: Travel north on Highway 93 from Hamilton for approximately 4 miles. At the stop light (Woodside cut-off), turn west onto Dutchman Flat Road toward Pinesdale. Travel approximately 2 ½ miles and then turn south toward Mill Creek. Travel approximately 1/3 mile to a sign indicating the Mill Creek Trail. Turn west and travel approximately one mile to the trailhead.

Activities: The lower part of the trail was heavily burned by the fires of 2000. The site provides an opportunity to discuss fire ecology and the natural recovery process following fire. Mill Creek follows the lower end of the trail and so the site could also be used to monitor aquatic ecosystems following fire.

Facilities: Mill Creek Trailhead has no bathroom facilities. The trailhead has good parking and turnaround facilities for a school bus.

Blodgett Canyon Trail (#5)

Location: Turn west on Main St. in Hamilton off Highway 93. Continue as Main St. becomes West Bridge Rd. (keep to the right). At the end of West Bridge Rd. turn left on Blodgett Camp Rd. and follow the signs to the Blodgett Canyon Campground.

Activities: A trail leads from the parking area through a landscape burned in the fires of 2000. The trail winds through the canyon and provides a good opportunity to discuss the geology of the Bitterroot Mountains as well as, the role of fire in the ecosystem.

Facilities: A restroom is located in the parking area. The parking area is large enough to turn around a school bus. The campground provides a picnic area and restroom facilities.

Blodgett Overlook Trail (#6)

Location: Turn west on Main St. in Hamilton off Highway 93. Continue as Main St. becomes West Bridge Rd., (keep to the right). At the end of West Bridge Rd. turn left on Blodgett Camp Rd. and follow the signs to the Canyon Creek Trailhead/Blodgett Overlook Trailhead.

Activities: The parking area is adjacent to Canyon Creek; therefore discussions on riparian communities and stream monitoring activities could occur at the site. The 1½-mile moderate level of difficulty trail provides an excellent opportunity to view and discuss fire behavior and fire ecology. The site might also be desirable for establishing long-term monitoring plots for classroom analysis. The end of the trail provides a spectacular view of the Blodgett Canyon. Hence the site can be used to discuss the geology of the Bitterroot Mountains, as well.

Facilities: The site has a parking area and an outhouse. The area can accommodate a school bus.

Centennial Grove Trail (#7)

Location: Travel two miles south of Hamilton on Highway 93. Turn east onto Skalkaho Highway 38. Continue 12 miles on the highway to the Centennial Grove parking area.

Activities: A short interpretive trail takes visitors through a 200-year-old ponderosa pine grove along Skalkaho Creek. The interpretive trail discusses the ponderosa pine ecosystem.

Facilities: A parking area along Skalkaho Highway 38 would allow for bus parking. The site has no bathroom facility. However a short distance up Highway 38 (one mile) is Black Bear Campground that does have a bathroom facility.

Southern Bitterroot Valley

Lick Creek Demonstration Forest (#8)

Location: Turn right on Lake Como Road, which is eight miles northwest of Darby off of Highway 93. Drive three miles and turn right on Road 5623. The site is located on the north side of Lake Como and follows Road 5621 to Lost Horse Creek.

Activities: This is a 5,400 acre site which offers opportunities to study the influence of fire and timber harvesting on a low elevation ponderosa pine ecosystem. A seven mile, eleven-site interpretive auto-tour passes through the heart of the Lick Creek Demonstration Forest. The auto tour booklet discusses the geology, history, resource management and research that has occurred and is on-going in this low elevation ponderosa pine ecosystem. The site might be desirable for establishing long-term monitoring plots for classroom analysis, as well.

Facilities: Bathroom facilities are located at Lake Como. A day-use picnic area is also located at Lake Como. The auto-tour road could accommodate a school bus.

Woods Cabin/Moose Pond at Lake Como (#9)

Location: Turn right on Lake Como Road, which is eight miles northwest of Darby off of Highway 93. Drive three miles and turn right on Road 5623. Continue toward the Upper Como Campground, the pond is located north of the road and Woods Cabin is south of the road.

Activities: Woods Cabin is an excellent facility to deliver conservation education presentations in a classroom environment. In order to reserve Woods Cabin, please contact the Darby Ranger Station at (406) 821-3913. The pond provides an opportunity to instruct students about wetland ecosystems, as well as sampling of aquatic insects and plants.

Facilities: Bathrooms are located at Lake Como and at Woods Cabin. The cabin has cooking facilities, tables and chairs. A large parking area is located across from the Moose Pond and adjacent to Woods Cabin.

Laird Creek Auto-Tour (#10)

Location: Travel 12 miles south of Darby on Highway 93 to the Laird Creek Road. Turn west on this road and travel approximately five miles to the Bear Creek Saddle. Continue west to the Crazy Creek Campground. Repeat travel back to Highway 93.

Activities: Travel this route to view and discuss the fires of 2000, rehabilitation efforts following the fires (i.e., waddles, culvert replacement, lop and scatter, contour felling, planting etc), mudslides and rehabilitation activities following the slides.

Facilities: The road is adequate for a school bus, but caution is always necessary when driving forest service roads. The Crazy Creek Campground has a bathroom facility and a picnic area.

Spring Gulch Campground (#11)

Location: Travel three miles north of Sula on Highway 93. The campground is located directly off Highway 93.

Activities: The site is located directly on the Bitterroot River, so the site lends itself well to an aquatic/watershed education program. Students could conduct an array of water quality monitoring activities.

Facilities: The site can accommodate bus transportation easily. The campground has picnic areas and bathroom facilities.

Indian Trees Campground (#12)

Location: Indian Trees Campground is located roughly 4 miles South of Sula, just west of Highway 93. Look for the signs on Highway 93.

Activities: Within the campground are numerous ponderosa pine trees that have been peeled by Native Americans. The trees are an excellent tool to teach about Native American use of the Bitterroot Valley.

Facilities: The site has campsites, picnic tables and restroom facilities. The campground has a circle loop through which a school bus can turn around.

Waugh Gulch Demonstration Site (#13)

Location: Travel approximately four miles south of Sula on Highway 93. Turn west at the Indian Tree Campground sign and keep to the right. Approximately 1 ½ miles past the campground you will arrive at the site.

Activities: The USFS implemented various fuels reduction treatments following the fires of 2000. The community and USFS personnel implemented rehabilitation efforts to protect the soils in the area, i.e., planting of pine seedlings. Teachers can discuss fire ecology, fuel level reduction and rehabilitation techniques used following fire. The site might also be desirable for establishing long-term monitoring plots for classroom analysis

Facilities: Bathroom facilities are located at the Indian Tree Campground, but not at the demonstration site. The road to the site is a mountain windy road and is not easily traveled by a bus. The turnaround for a school bus would be one mile past the demonstration site. Travel to this site would be best in high clearance passenger vehicles instead of a school bus.