



Celebrating Tribal Ceremony

Aug 22-31, 2025

Pursuant to the American Indian Religious Freedom Act, the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, and the Cultural and Heritage Cooperation Authority, the USDA Forest Service is required to ensure access to National Forest System land, to the maximum extent practicable, by Indians and Indian Tribes for traditional and cultural purposes.

2024 marked the first time the Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest coordinated with the Tribes by temporarily closing a small portion of the High Cascades Ranger District to allow for this culturally important ceremony to take place.

“By implementing this temporary area closure, we recognized and celebrated tribal ceremony for our local indigenous Tribes. It is a positive step forward with our trust relationships,” said Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest Supervisor Molly Juillerat.

Know Before You Go

The Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest will be issuing a temporary closure for Tribal ceremonial purposes on Huckleberry Mountain. The closure area includes Huckleberry Camping Area and its surrounding area.

The closure will be for a 10-day period, from August 22, 2025 through August 31, 2025.

The following individuals or groups are exempt from the closure order:

- Those with a specific authorizing permit;
- Any organized rescue or firefighting force operating in their official duty; and
- Any member of the Klamath Tribes, or those invited by the Klamath Tribes, to participate in ceremonial activities.

Alternative Huckleberry Picking Spots

- Rabbit Ears area
- Huckleberry Gap and along Forest Road 6640 toward Grey Rock
- Along Forest Road 6215, west of Red Blanket Mountain
- Bessie Rock/Meadow and Snowbrush Gulch
- Parker Meadows
- Brown Mountain

Recommended Campgrounds

- Union Creek Campground
- Natural Bridge Campground
- Jim Creek Campground
- River Bridge Campground
- Mill Creek Campground
- South Fork Campground
- Farewell Bend Campground

Recommended Dispersed Camping Areas

- Foster Creek: Near the junction of Forest Road 6540 and Forest Road 6520
- Mt. Stella Road: First two miles up the road
- Woodruff Bridge: Between Day Use Area and OHV Corrals
- Forest Road 60/Mill Creek/Forest Road 300 area
- Forest Road 6215: First 2-3 miles up the road and the Forest Road 250.



*The Harold Bell Wright family is from the Klamath, Modoc, Northern Paiute, Molalla, and Pit River people. The parents, Harold “Plummy” Wright (Klamath/Modoc/Pit River) and Mary Ann Jackson Wright (Klamath/Modoc/Mollola/Paiute), taught three generations of family how to pick huckleberries at the Huckleberry Mountain site near what is now known as Crater Lake National Park. Their families know this area as **Giiwas**, and have come to Huckleberry Mountain for multiple generations, staying for a month to collect berries and roots, and to hunt deer.*

Plummy was 88 years-old when he did his final picking at Huckleberry Mountain in 2021. They shared stories of their training to care for the plants. Plummy did mention that the ancestors of the Tribes used to burn parts of the huckleberry patches to increase the plant harvest for future years.

Klamath Tribes’ 88-year old Harold Bell (Plummy) Wright picks huckleberries at Huckleberry Mountain during ceremony in 2021. Photo courtesy of The Klamath Tribes.

Cultural Importance and Ceremonial Gathering



The area of Huckleberry Mountain was used by the Klamaths for subsistence and medicinal gathering. The Klamath families would stay at Huckleberry Mountain for over 30 days as the berries ripened to gather huckleberries, wild blackberries, strawberries and medicinal plants during the season to can and process the berries. Huckleberry Mountain was and is an important place, ethnographically and for gathering to the Tribes.

Chairman Ray, The Klamath Tribes

Garin Riddle, Klamath Tribes Culture and Heritage Department, explains the importance of wild huckleberries: “Since the creation of the muq’luqs [people] by the creator, Gkumukamps, long ago, the muq’luqs have been following the instructions to go to the mountains and water springs to gather medicines, foods and spiritual power. With the instructions and guidance from the creator, we have been taught to caretake these lands made for the muq’luqs, utilizing fire, wild tending of foods and medicines and always giving thanks for the abundance of all that the creator had placed within our homelands. These instructions included having ceremony to honor the spirit of the lands and the vast abundance that exists in these special places. I’waam Geeni is one of these places, commonly known as Huckleberry Mountain. This ceremony has been taking place since time immemorial to include as part of the ceremony singing, dancing, gambling, horse racing, foot racing and several weeks of tribal family community fellowship. It was once said if we do not give thanks for the foods and medicines with ceremony, these foods and medicines will cease to exist in our homelands.

There were two themes to the indigenous training: First, to take care of the plants, and second, not to over-harvest the plants. We were taught to take the biggest berries, leave the smaller berries to grow bigger to feed the animals and birds. We were taught to leave berries behind and not completely pick over the bush. The berries were handpicked, individually, and we were told not to squeeze them hard when taking off the bush, so as not to squish the berry, and then they were placed into containers. We were taught not to overfill our hands with berries, so as not to drop them. The berries are precious food items.”

Biology of Wild Huckleberries

Wild huckleberries in the Pacific Northwest are members of the Ericaceous family's *Vaccinium* genus. The word "huckleberry" originally referred to the species *Vaccinium myrtillus*, which occurs in England, Europe, and as far north and east as Siberia. There are approximately 35 species of *Vaccinium* in North America, and most are commonly known as huckleberries, blueberries, or cranberries. Several of these species are culturally important to First Nations peoples of southern Oregon, including The Klamath Tribes. Thinleaf huckleberry, in particular, is primarily what species is harvested during the annual ceremony.



Thinleaf Huckleberry
Vaccinium membranaceum



Red Huckleberry
Vaccinium parvifolium

Thinleaf huckleberry (*Vaccinium membranaceum*) is native to western North America, with a wide range extending from northern Alaska, Yukon, and Northwest Territories, and south as far as Utah and the northern mountains of California. It can be found from the mountains next to the Pacific Ocean in the west, to the Rocky Mountains and Black Hills in the east. Isolated populations of this species have been found in Arizona, North Dakota, Minnesota, the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, and Ontario.

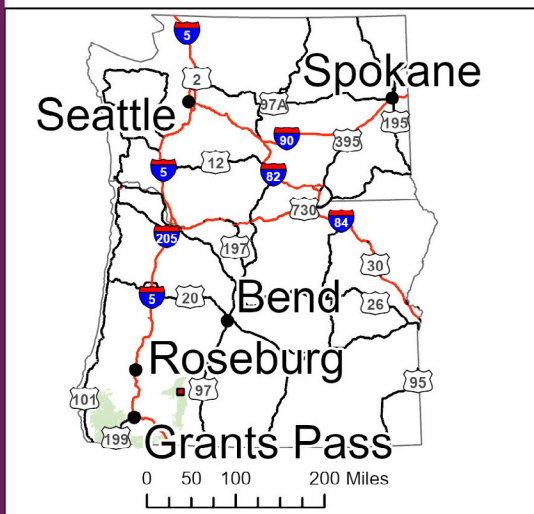
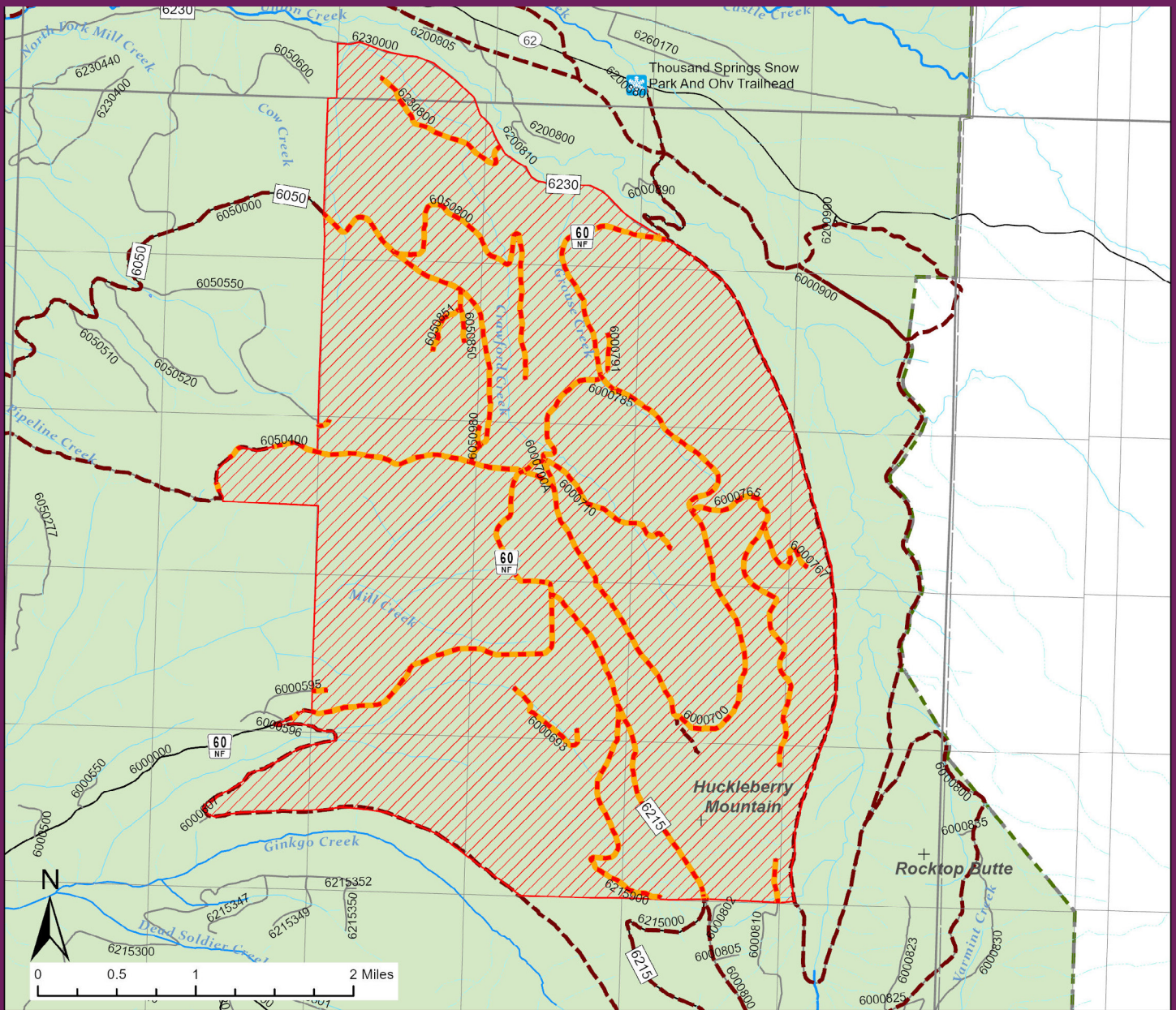
Thinleaf huckleberry grows at higher elevations in subalpine and alpine environments. In forests, it often dominates the forest understory during early to mid stages of succession, and is a species that is considered to be fire adapted. The leaves and stems of the huckleberry are resistant to low-intensity fires, and if burned away they will resprout vigorously from rhizomes buried under the soil.¹







Know Before You Go: Responsible and Ethical Harvesting Practices

- 1. Hand-pick your berries.** Never use berry-picking rakes to harvest: They damage plants by removing leaves and breaking delicate branches, and will lead to fewer berries and unhealthy plants in future seasons.
- 2. Share the bounty.** Wildlife also depend on these species for subsistence, and there are plenty of berries to go around.
- 3. Be a good steward.** Make sure you're leaving your chosen berry-picking spot in as good of shape as it was when you arrived, if not better.
- 4. Only take what you need.** Make sure you've got permits, where appropriate. If you're not sure, please visit <https://www.fs.usda.gov/r06/rogue-siskiyou/permits/forest-products-permits> for more information, or call High Cascades Ranger District.

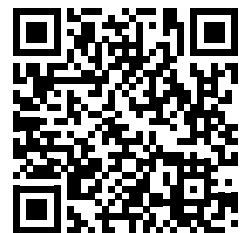
¹ Information from [iNaturalist's species profile](#)

2025 Ceremonial Area and 10-Day Temporary Public Closure Area



-  Area Closure
-  Closed Trails and Roads
-  Trails
-  USFS Admin Boundary
-  Ranger District Boundary
-  National Forest Land

Learn More



For more information, please call (541) 646-9177