

Badger Creek Wilderness

Fifteenmile Creek Addition

Wasco County
3,467 acres
Mount Hood National Forest

Description:

Fifteenmile Creek is known for its remarkable diversity of plants and animals. It is one of the most pristine areas on the east

side of Mt. Hood -- a rare example of a fully functioning intact roadless watershed which is capable of aiding the recovery of countless old-growth dependent species. The Northwest Forest Plan has identified Fifteenmile Creek as a "Key Watershed" meaning it is crucial for the recovery of salmon runs in the region. This area is in the transition zone between the drier east side and moist west side forests of Mount Hood. Three hundred year old Ponderosa pine trees dot the open ridge tops, grandiose boulder fields line the canyon rims, and ancient Douglas firs flourish by the creek. The view from the trail allows hikers to see all the way past the Deschutes Valley. Fifteenmile Creek has one of the healthiest stands of Ponderosa pine stands on the Mount Hood National Forest. In the spring the open meadows have countless wildflowers including Balsam Root and Lupine.

Ecological, geological, and scenic value:

The Mount Hood National Forest has 15 species of conifer, and 12 of those species can be seen in the first two miles of the Fifteenmile Creek trail. The ridge tops have classic old-growth ponderosa pine forests and the creek side resembles an old-growth west side Douglas fir and western red cedar forest. The lower elevations of Fifteenmile Creek are home to ancient cottonwood and white oak trees. This diversity provides excellent habitat for an array of species, including western grey squirrel, pileated woodpecker, peregrine falcon, and spotted owl. The area also harbors key winter range for deer and elk. Fifteenmile Creek itself is the only creek on the east side of Mount Hood where saltwater fish return to fresh waters to spawn. A large waterfall on White River prevents fish passage into the majority of the rivers on the east side of Mount Hood. Fish species in Fifteenmile Creek include spring Chinook salmon, and both winter and summer steelhead. These steelhead runs are the easternmost runs of wild winter steelhead.

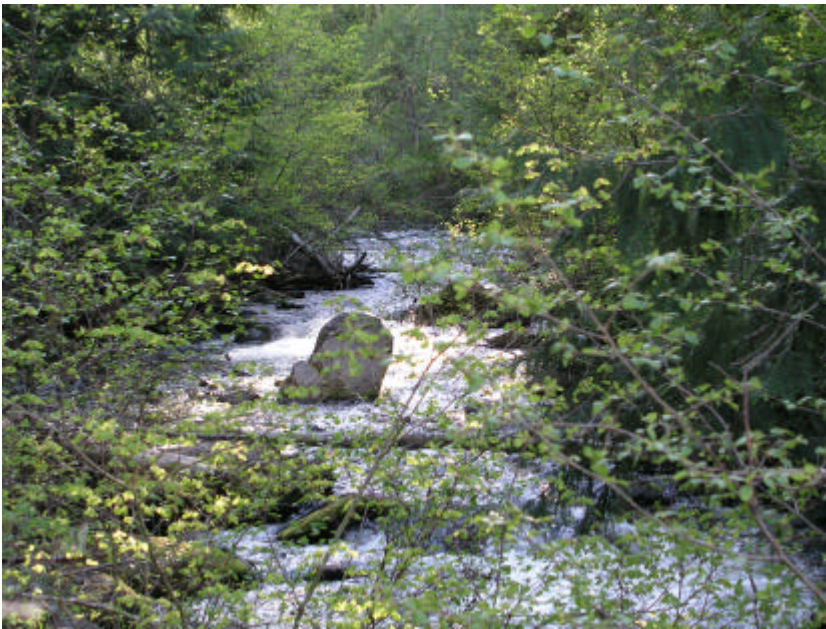
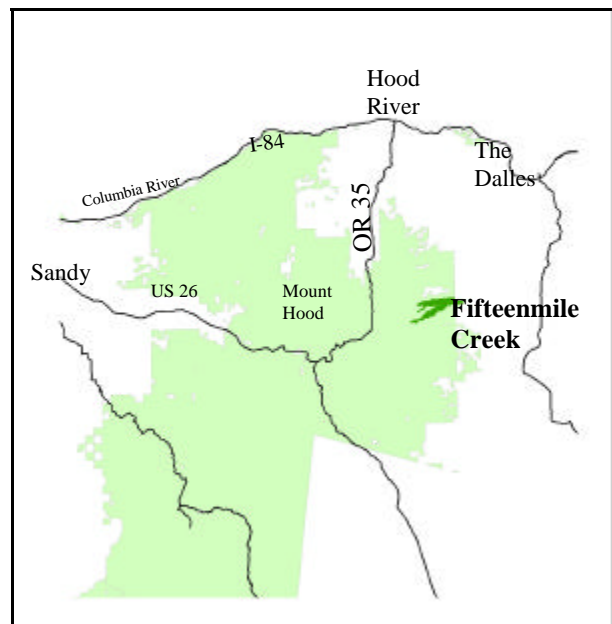


Photo by Tess Keith



Photo by ONRC

Opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation:

Primitive camping, hiking, and backpacking are possible along the Fifteenmile Creek trail. It is possible to float or paddle Fifteenmile Creek at some times of year. This remote and wild area has ample opportunities for solitude; it is free of signs of human development apart from its hiking trails. The unit is also an excellent area for birdwatchers because of its diversity of habitats.

Threats:

Logging is always a threat to the Fifteenmile Creek area, especially because it contains eastside Ponderosa pine stands, which are often unnecessarily cut under the guise of fire prevention. Ponderosa pine is naturally adapted to survive fires, and in fact its pine cones release seeds only under the extreme heat of fire. Thus fire allows new generations of Ponderosa pine to germinate and continue the plant's life cycle. Wilderness will provide permanent protection for these important Ponderosa stands, watersheds, and the rest of Fifteenmile Creek's remarkable tapestry of plant and animal life by preventing logging as well as associated road-building and development.



Photo by Alex P. Brown