

## **Clear Lake Ridge Preserve** **Visitor Information**

Clear Lake Ridge lies on the northeastern flanks of the Wallowa Mountains. A prairie-covered plateau with mile-high lakes and a steep canyon provide a spectacular setting and diverse habitats for birds and other wildlife. An expansive basalt plateau, hosting three shallow lakes amid native grasslands, gives way to Devil's Gulch, a canyon plunging 3,000 feet toward Little Sheep Creek. Views from the plateau include the Seven Devil's range across Hells Canyon into Idaho, and south to the 9,000-ft peaks of the Eagle Cap Wilderness in the Wallowas.

### **Directions**

*The preserve is accessible from two directions. One entrance is on a paved road and is easier on your car.*

*From Joseph:*

- Drive approximately 20 miles east on the Little Sheep Creek Highway (toward Imnaha).
- When you see the Wallowa Whitman National Forest sign on the south (right) side of the highway, pull over at the next tributary and park on the south side of the highway. A fish hatchery is 0.5 mile further, if you miss the preserve entrance.
- Cross the footbridge over the creek near the preserve signs.
- Go through the pole fence and hike up the canyon.

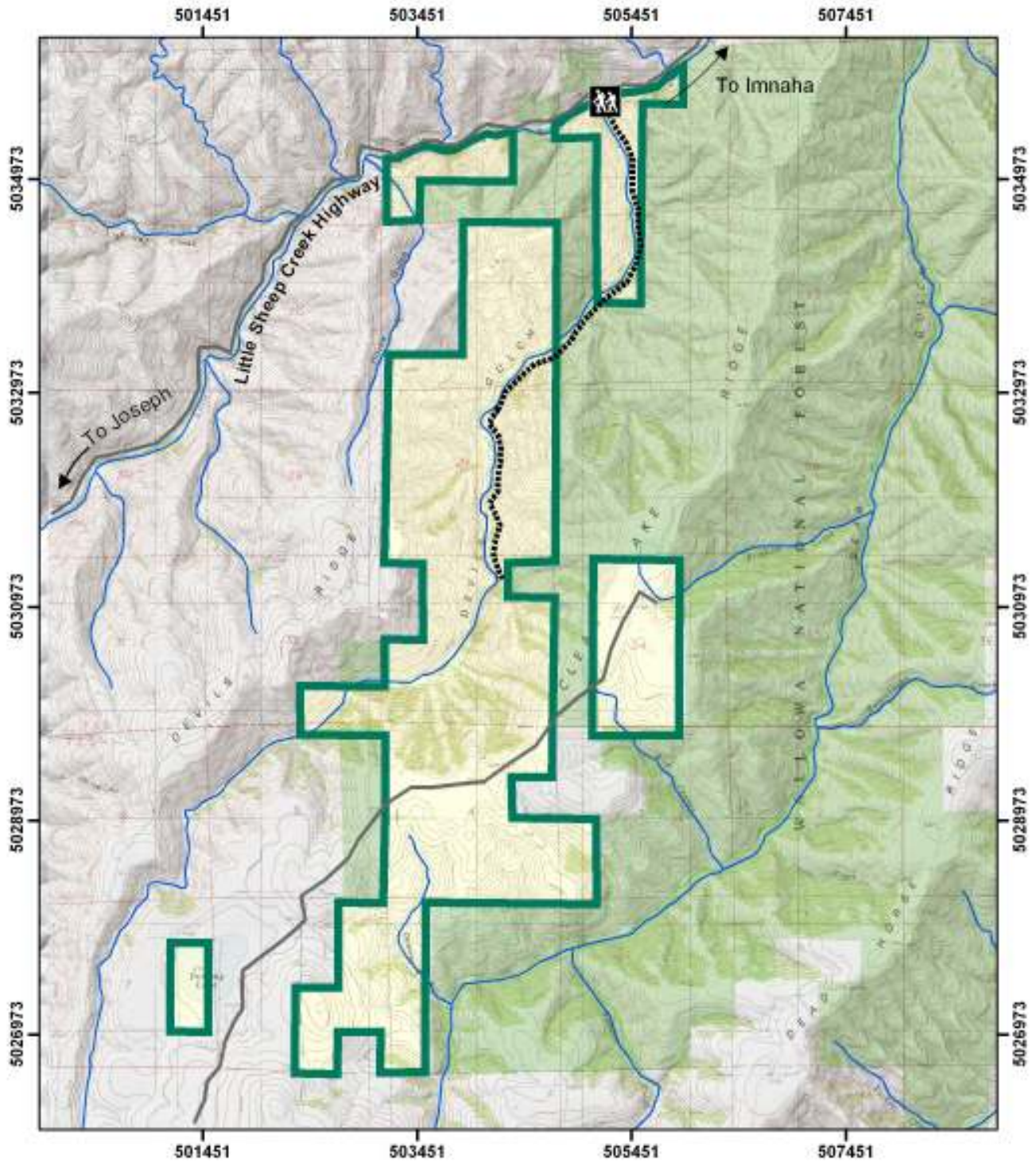
*The second route takes you to the ridge and lakes via a rough and muddy road passable only June through October, depending on weather conditions. From Joseph:*

- Take the Little Sheep Creek Highway 0.8 mile past milepost 8.
- Just after the turnoff for the scenic highway to Halfway, turn right on Rail Canyon road and set your odometer to 0.
- At the first junction (4.4 miles), continue straight on the main road (the road to the right has a cattle guard and sign numbered 91076).
- At the second junction (6.8 miles), continue on the main road, which veers 90 degrees to the left. Over the next three miles, you will pass through a cattle guard (7.8 miles) and at least two wire gates (at mileages 9.1 and 9.6). Please leave gates open or closed as you find them.
- After arriving at Downey Lake (on your left – west – at approximately the 10 mile mark), you can continue on the same road up the slope along the preserve ridge line and through U.S. Forest Service land.
- If you continue past two more gates (at mileages 10.8 and 12.5), you will arrive at Clear Lake (13.1 miles) and Mud Lake (13.9 miles).

Two key native grassland communities on the preserve include bunchgrass species; Idaho fescue, junegrass and bluebunch wheatgrass. Rocky Mountain elk, mule deer, cougar and black bear are found on the preserve. Colonies of Belding ground squirrels inhabit the grasslands and provide food for raptors, coyote and badger. More than 250 species of birds are known to frequent the preserve, and at least 100 have been observed nesting, including mountain bluebirds, grasshopper sparrows and red-eyed vireo. Golden eagles and ferruginous hawks have nested in the vicinity of Downey Lake. In addition, Swainson's hawks and goshawks are periodically seen on the preserve, as are mountain quail, ruffed grouse, yellow-breasted chats, lazuli buntings and canyon wrens.

Access is by foot only, and is day use only. Dogs, horses and bicycles are not permitted on the preserve. Deer and elk hunting are allowed. Bear and bird hunting is not. Please be conscious of ownership boundaries and do not trespass on privately owned lands neighboring the preserve. Please contact Angie Freeman at The Nature Conservancy's Enterprise office at 426-3458 with questions, comments or to inquire how you can get involved with volunteer efforts on the preserve.

# Clear Lake Ridge Preserve



## Legend

-  Preserve Boundary
-  Trail Head
-  Public Access Trail
-  U.S. Forest Service
-  Streams
-  Roads



Scale 1:55,000

Universal Transverse Mercator  
Projection (Zone 11)  
North American Datum 1927



The Nature Conservancy 

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