

Location and Contact Information

Tenderfoot Creek Experimental Forest lies about 40 miles north of White Sulphur Springs and about 71 miles southeast of Great Falls, Montana. It's jointly administered and managed by the USDA Forest Service Rocky Mountain Research Station (RMRS) and the Helena–Lewis and Clark National Forest.

To access the experimental forest from U.S. Highway 89 in the Helena–Lewis and Clark National Forest, turn west on U.S. Forest Service Road 839, just north of Kings Hill Pass, and continue for about 12 miles. Interior roads in the experimental forest are closed to motorized vehicles except for administrative use.

For more information:

www.fs.fed.us/rmrs/experimental-forests-and-ranges

Or contact:

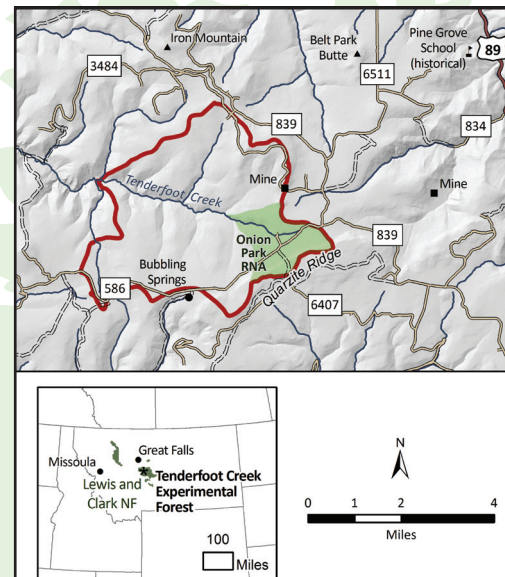
RMRS Missoula Fire Sciences Lab
5775 U.S. Highway 10 West
Missoula, MT 59808
406-329-4800
www.fs.fed.us/rmrs
www.firelab.org

Helena–Lewis and Clark
National Forest
2880 Skyway Dr.
Helena, MT 59602
406-449-5201
www.fs.usda.gov/lcnf

Map of the Rocky Mountain Research Station



Map of Tenderfoot Creek Experimental Forest



Front panel photo: Upper Sun Creek.
(Photo: Lance Glasgow)

Rocky Mountain Research Station

The Rocky Mountain Research Station (RMRS) is one of seven units within U.S. Forest Service Research and Development. RMRS maintains 12 field laboratories throughout a 12-state territory encompassing parts of the Great Basin, Southwest, Rocky Mountains and the Great Plains.

RMRS administers and conducts research on 14 Experimental Forests and Ranges (EF&Rs) in seven states. The U.S. Forest Service's EF&R network represents many of the ecosystem types found in the United States and Puerto Rico. Most EF&Rs contain significant acreage and many encompass large experimental study sites that are used to examine the effects of operational-scale treatments such as prescribed burning and forest thinning. RMRS also oversees activities on several hundred Research Natural Areas, which have been set aside to conduct research while conserving biological diversity.

For more information:

Rocky Mountain Research Station
240 West Prospect Road
Fort Collins, CO 80526-2098
970-498-1100

www.fs.fed.us/rmrs
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Tenderfoot Creek Experimental Forest

*Forest research in the
Little Belt Mountains of
Central Montana*



Forest
Service

Rocky Mountain
Research Station

Lodgepole Pine Forest Research and More

In west-central Montana, near the Showdown Montana ski area, lies a high elevation watershed that has been set aside for scientific field research since 1961. This area, known as the Tenderfoot Creek Experimental Forest, was originally created for hydrological research and to help find ways to manage lodgepole pine forests while mitigating erosion and increasing water availability. The area is considered a representative lodgepole pine forest of the Northern Rockies.

In the late 1980s, research at the experimental forest was expanded to include fire history, fisheries, plant and animal studies, climate, snowfall, water distribution and quality, wildland fuel dynamics, and other studies related to forest management. This research has helped with management of the vast lodgepole pine forests that grow east of the



A researcher cleans debris from the Pack Creek flume at the experimental forest. (Photo: Duncan Lutes)



Prescribed burns are one of many management methods studied at the experimental forest.

Continental Divide in the Northern Rocky Mountains.

The 9,125-acre site is composed of lodgepole pine, Engelmann spruce and subalpine fir forests along with wet meadows, grassland parks, and slopes covered with small stone fragments, or scree. The experimental forest also includes the Onion Park Research Natural Area, which is managed to preserve its minimally disturbed condition. The area is home to elk, moose, deer, black bears, Clark's nutcrackers, goshawks, bobcats and several species of trout.

Public Uses: What to Know

As part of a national forest, Tenderfoot Creek Experimental Forest is available for public use, including hunting, hiking, snowmobile riding, camping and wildlife watching. The experimental forest is available by request for outdoor classes and educational uses. Harley Park, located on the east side of the experimental forest, is a popular stargazing destination. The experimental forest is also an important watershed for central Montana and feeds into the Smith River. Because this is a

research site, visitors should be careful to preserve the vegetation, wildlife and research equipment they encounter, including more than 300 permanent gridded research plots spread across the experimental forest.

Conducting Research at the Experimental Forest

Tenderfoot Creek Experimental Forest is a popular place for Rocky Mountain forest research, with several projects usually occurring at any given time. It is the only experimental forest on the east slope of the U.S. Northern Rockies.

The experimental forest, which is accessible nearly year-round by automobile or snowmobile, includes a ten-bed

bunkhouse, a basic laboratory, drying ovens, a tool shop, internal access roads, 10 hydrologic flumes and an open-channel measurement site. Researchers also have access to more than 20 years worth of long-term data on topics ranging from stream and sediment flow, snow and rain levels and water quality.

Over the years, researchers at the experimental forest have included scientists from the USDA Forest Service, the University of Montana, Duke University and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. For more information on research opportunities, historical data or other uses of the experimental forest, contact the Rocky Mountain Research Station Missoula Fire Sciences Laboratory at (406) 329-4800.



Onion Park Research Natural Area in the experimental forest. (Photo: Lance Glasgow)