

Thirtymile Recreation Area

Visitor Information



The Prineville BLM District's Central Oregon Field Office manages the Thirtymile Recreation Area which includes portions of Armstrong Canyon, Thirtymile Creek, and the John Day River totaling approximately 20,000 acres of BLM-administered lands located on the east side of the John Day River, approximately ten miles southwest of Condon, Oregon.

Can I drive down to the river?

Yes. Directions from Highway 19 are shown on the attached map (pg.3). The John Day River can be accessed by taking Armstrong Road down the canyon then continuing along the road on the south side of Thirtymile Creek. Armstrong Road is open from April 1 to December 14, when a seasonal closure for resource protections goes into effect from December 15 to March 31.

Does it cost any money to drive this road?

The public has a right-of-way down Armstrong Road. Where it crosses private land, you must stay within the roadway. There are no fees to drive this road.

What is the condition of the road?

Armstrong Road is largely an unimproved dirt and rocky road. High clearance, all-season tires, and 4WD for trailers is recommended. The road may become impassable during or following rain events. It is a narrow road in places with few turnouts. Look ahead for oncoming vehicles and find the closest turnout, even if it is behind you. Yield to vehicles with trailers. Be aware that tall, dry vegetation can get caught in the under carriage of vehicles and start a vehicle or wildfire.

Is Armstrong Road open year-round?

No. A seasonal closure exists each year from December 15 to March 31 for resource protections and closes the road to motorized use (vehicle/OHV). Visitors can still use the road year-round to access the lower canyon by foot, bike (including class 1-2 e-bikes under pedal assistance only), and horseback.

How do I access upland areas east of Armstrong Road (at the top of the canyon)?

There is a public trail easement off of the east side of Armstrong Road (shown on map pg.3), located approximately one mile north of the intersection with Buckhorn Lane. This access point is signed and there is a gate providing non-mechanized (no bicycles) access to the area for walking or horseback riding. Please respect private property and stay on the roadway along the fenced easement portions.

How do I access areas along Thirtymile Creek upstream of its intersection with Armstrong Rd?

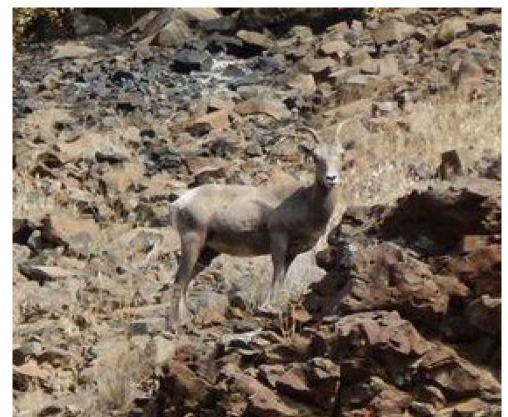
Parking is allowed along Armstrong Road near its intersection with Thirtymile Creek. Non-motorized access (including class 1-2 e-bikes under pedal assistance only) is allowed along these routes from May 16 to November 30 each year. Routes are closed to all public access during wildlife winter range and fish spawning season (December 1 to May 15) in this area.

Is the area open for hunting?

Yes. Public lands are open for legal hunting unless specifically closed. Shooting is not allowed in developed recreation sites year-round or within the John Day River corridor from May 1 to August 31 unless legally hunting. For specific hunting regulations and registration, contact the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Can I park along the road to access areas on foot?

You can park along roads if there is enough space to get your vehicle fully off the roadway. Do not park in tall vegetation that might present a fire hazard. Avoid parking in muddy areas.



Last updated: 9/3/2025

Can I use the Thirtymile boat launch?

A primitive boat launch is available in the former agriculture field just upriver from the mouth of Thirtymile Creek. Follow Armstrong Road until you arrive at the parking area by the river (see map pg.3). Access to the John Day River and a boating information kiosk are provided at the river's edge.

Is the Thirtymile boat launch site improved?

The boat launch is a primitive ramp while awaiting funding for improvements. Boats may need to be unloaded and carried 30+ feet to the river across rocks; distance is based on water level and is dependent upon vehicle/trailer type. Be aware of river current as water level fluctuates.

Is there parking and room for trailers at the Thirtymile launch site?

There is space available for parking with trailers near the boat ramp. Please do not block the boat ramp or access to it.

Can I camp down by the river?

Until such time that a developed campground is built, dispersed camping is allowed and available in the cleared space of the open field near the boat launch (see map inset). The old roads leading upstream and downstream of the boat launch are closed to motorized use but are open to foot, bike, and horseback travel. There is no potable water, garbage, or cell service. Pack out all garbage.

Are there restrooms available?

Until BLM can install a vault toilet at the boat ramp, there is no toilet onsite. Boaters on overnight trips are required to carry and use a leak-proof, portable toilet system to remove solid waste from the river canyon. All other visitors must either carry a portable toilet and remove all waste or dig a cat hole and bury waste at least 8 inches deep and over 200' from water.

Are campfires allowed?

Within the Wild and Scenic River corridor (see map pg.3), campfires are only allowed in firepans and not at all during annual fire restrictions. No campfires, smokers, barbeques, portable propane campfires, etc. are allowed from June 1 to October 15 each year, visitors must use white gas or propane stoves designed for cooking or lighting only. Smoking is only allowed in closed vehicles, in boats on the water, or while standing in the water. Outside of the river corridor, visitors must follow public use restrictions published on the [BLM website](#).

Do I need a permit to launch from the Thirtymile site?

An online launch permit is required year-round to boat between Service Creek and Tumwater Falls on the John Day River, including at Thirtymile. Permits for [day](#) and [overnight](#) boating use are available at [Recreation.gov](#). Visit our John Day River [BLM.gov webpage](#) for boating information.

Can I use a shuttle to move my vehicle?

Shuttle operator contacts are listed on the John Day River [BLM.gov webpage](#). The BLM does not regulate individuals or companies providing shuttle services. The BLM does not endorse shuttle providers.

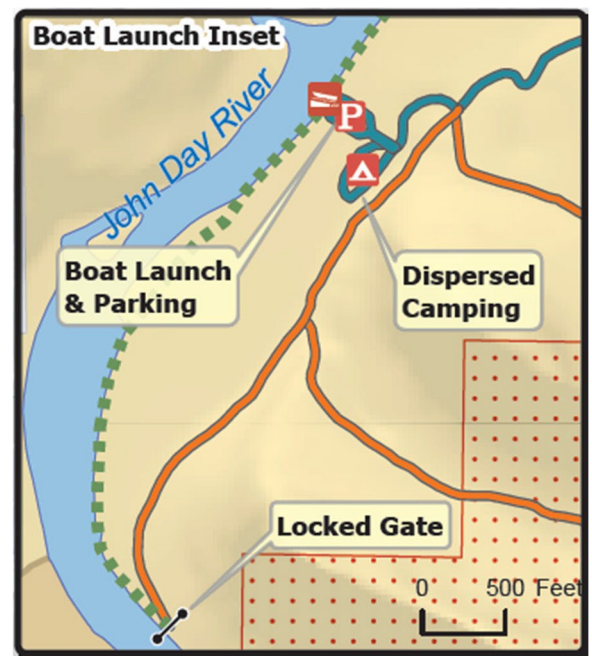
What if I want to be a guide for hunting, fishing or rafting on the John Day River?

Commercial operators need to have a Special Recreation Permit. Interested parties should contact the Prineville BLM for more information at (541) 416-6700.

Can I ride a mountain bike or OHV in this area?

Traditional bikes and class 1-2 e-bikes (under pedal assistance only) are allowed on non-motorized trails when routes are open. You can only ride OHVs on seasonally open routes designated for motorized use. No cross-country travel is allowed. See map pg.3 for seasonally closed route dates.

What if I have additional questions? Please contact Prineville District BLM at (541) 416-6700



See map pg.3 for legend details



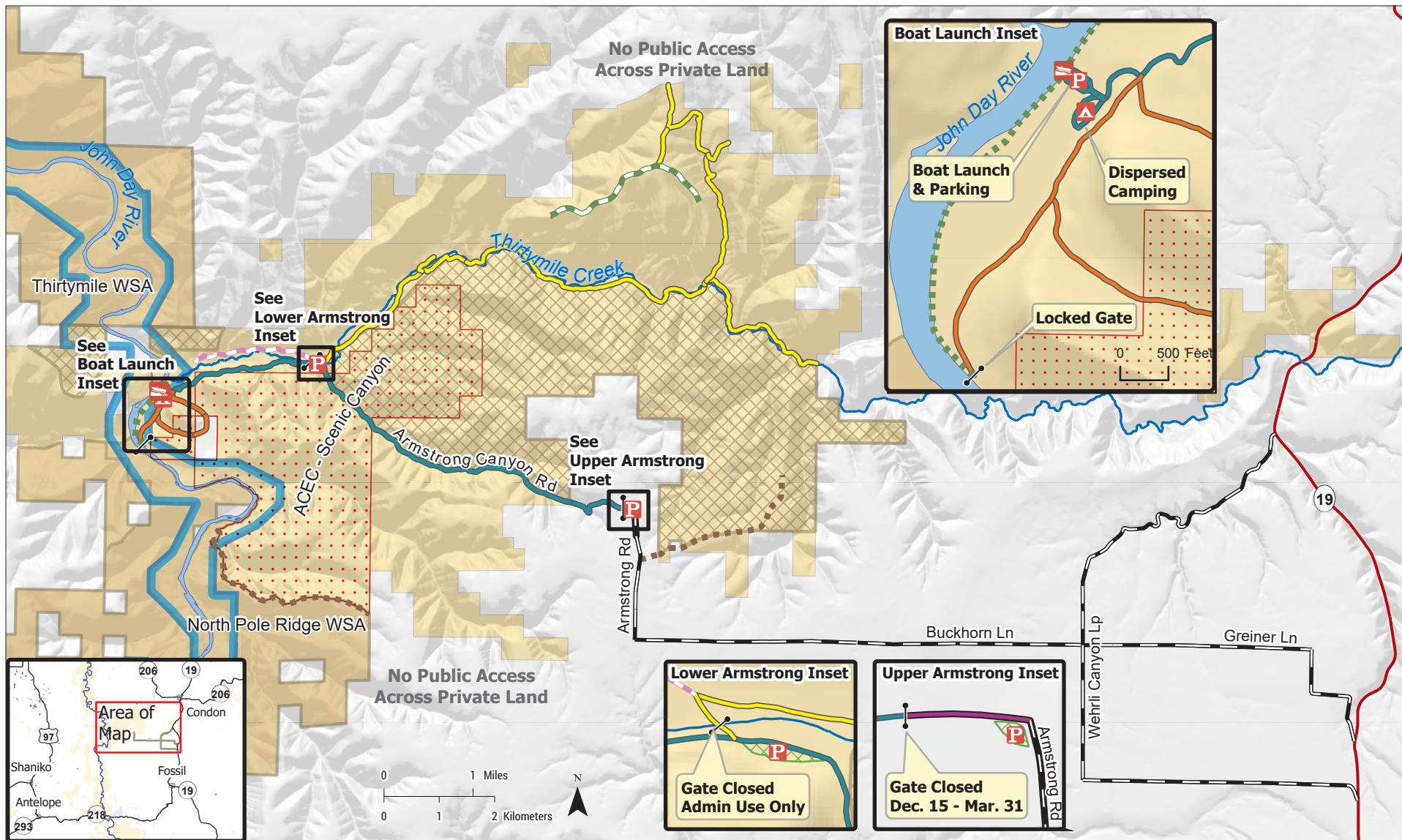
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Interim Travel Map

Bureau of Land Management
Prineville District Office
3050 NE 3rd St
Prineville, OR 97754
(541) 416-6700



8/27/2025



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|-------------------|---------------|---|---------------------------|--|--|--|--|---------------------|
| Boat Ramp | Major Streams | Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) | Bureau of Land Management | Interim Travel Plan | Primitive Road-Nonmotorized*; Routes Closed to Public Access During Winter Range & Spawning Season (12/1 - 5/15) | Primitive Road-Route Closed to Public Access: Administrative and Authorized Use Only | Primitive Road-Motorized*, but No Overland Access; Nonmotorized* Allowed | Trail-Nonmotorized* |
| Dispersed Camping | WSR Corridor | Wilderness Study Areas | Private/Other | Road-Motorized*-Year Round | Public Access During Winter Range & Spawning Season (12/1 - 5/15) | Primitive Road-Seasonal* (Closed 12/15 - 3/31) | Trail-Nonmechanized (i.e. no bikes/e-bikes) | |
| Parking | Gate | Lands With Wilderness Characteristics (LWC) | | Road-Motorized*-Seasonal (Closed 12/15 - 3/31) | | E-bikes allowed on motorized and non-motorized roads and trails. | | |
| Parking Areas | | | | | | | | |

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