

Demijohn Flat and Penney Peak Area Hikes:

(Revised July 2022)

The Demijohn Flat and Penney Peak area has several great spring, fall, and (sometimes) winter hiking opportunities in a unique Pryor Mountain landscape. The area may be of less interest in the hottest summer months.

Although foot travel (human and horse) is allowed, none of these routes are formally designated by BLM as hiking routes. These routes are not signed and are not on public maps provided by BLM.¹ But they are wheel-free foot-trails available for public hiking and equestrian use. We hope that BLM will formally designate, and sign these foot-trails and show them on public maps in the future. Some sections of the routes below are designated by BLM for infrequent administrative use, but none are authorized for public mechanized (i.e. mountain bikes), or motorized use. Some sections of the routes described below follow old, in places faint, abandoned two-track routes. Others sections are off-trail.

The area east of Crooked Creek Road is designated by the Bureau of Land Management as either the Burnt Timber Canyon Wilderness Study Area (WSA, north and east of Demijohn Flat Trail and Crooked Creek Trail), or the nearly equivalent “Lands with Wilderness Characteristics” (LWC, south of Demijohn Flat Trail). It all should eventually be Congressionally designated as Wilderness. Much of the area is also designated as an Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC), and as the Demijohn Flat National Register District recognizing “*regionally significant cultural resource values*” including “*archaeologically intact remnants of proto-historic period Crow tipi habitation.*”

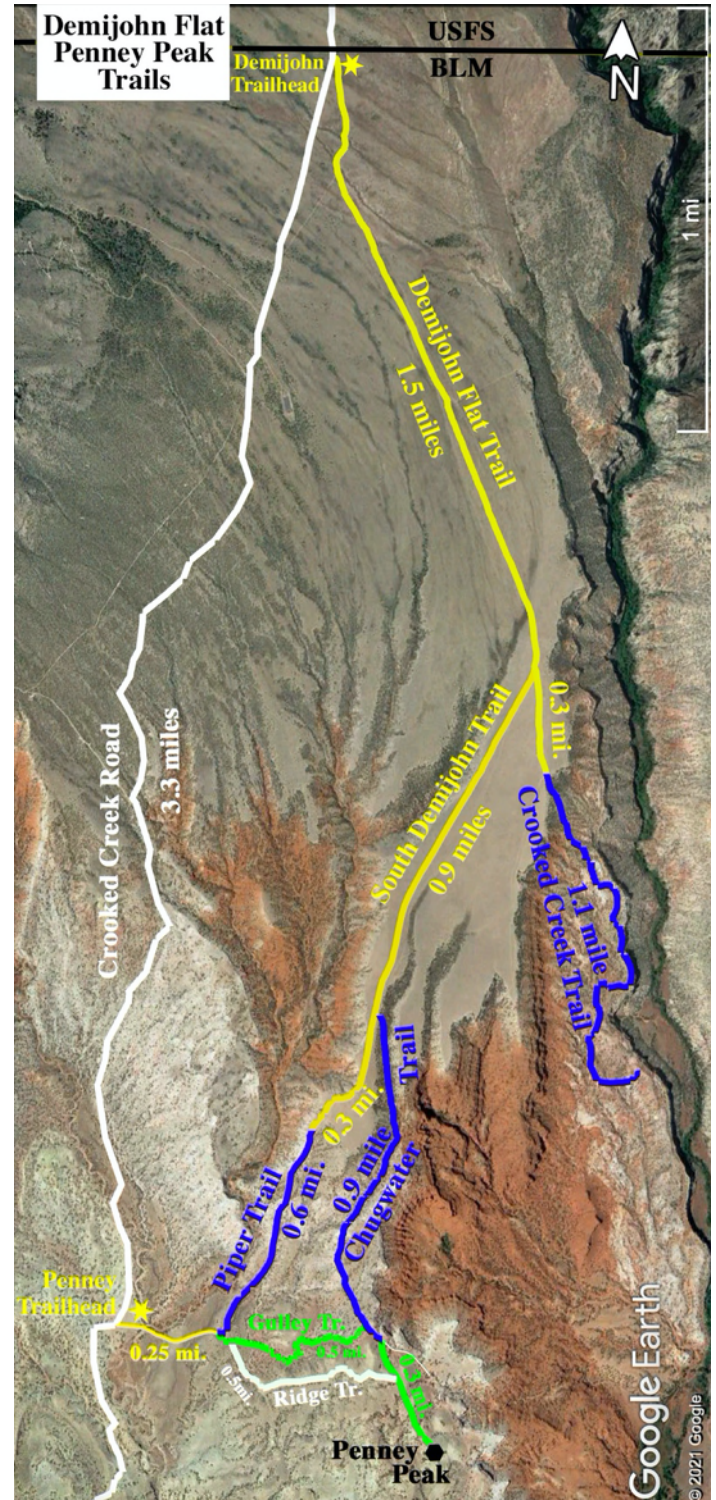
Penney Peak:

The panoramic view from Penney Peak includes the SE face of Big Pryor Mountain, the SW slopes of East Pryor Mountain, a dramatic basin of 250 million year old, deep red Chugwater shale and sandstone, the Crooked Creek Valley, and the Bighorn Mountains. Below we suggest two off-trail routes: the Gulley and Ridge Routes. They can be combined to make a loop hike. It is 2 miles round-trip.

Demijohn Flat Trail Network:

These trails provide options to explore Demijohn Flat, view Crooked Creek and its canyon, and/or connect with trails in the Penney Peak area. A car shuttle allows a one-way hike from the Demijohn Trailhead down either the Chugwater Trail (and a possible side trip to the top of Penny Peak), or down the Piper trail to the Penney Trailhead. It is a 5 mile one-way hike. Another alternative (without car shuttle) is from the Penney Trailhead up the Piper Trail to Demijohn Flat, down the Chugwater Trail, (again with a possible side trip to Penney Peak), and out the Gulley Trail back to the Penney Trailhead. It is a 3 ½ mile loop hike.

¹ Other than a generic “Demijohn Flat Trail” that includes several distinct trails, there are no “official” BLM names for these routes. We have provided names to help with route descriptions. BLM does have ID numbers for some of the routes.



Getting There: Driving Directions:

Two Trailheads:

There are two (unsigned) trailheads for these Demijohn-Penney hiking routes. Both are on the east side of Crooked Creek Road. For some hikes, two vehicles and a 3.3 mile car shuttle between the two trailheads may be desirable.

Detailed Driving directions from Highway 310

(for people not familiar with Crooked Creek Road)

Directions to the Demijohn and Penney Trailheads from either the north or south are included in the [Maps & Driving Directions](#) to Pryors Hiking Trailheads. Download and print at www.PryorMountains.org -- Hiking -- Hiking Overview.

Brief Driving Directions

(for people familiar with Crooked Creek Road)

From the south: The Penney Trailhead is on the east side of Crooked Creek Road 2.9 miles north of the Junction of Crooked Creek Rd. and Helt Rd. The Demijohn Trailhead is on the east side of Crooked Creek Road a few feet south of the USFS/BLM border fence and cattle guard, 3.3 miles north of the Penney Trailhead. (See descriptions and photos of the trailheads below.)

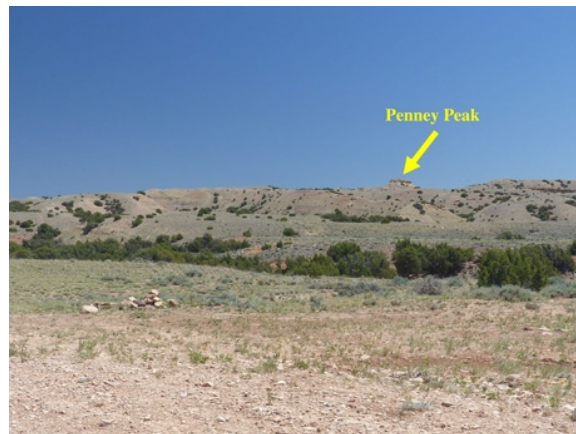
From the north: The Demijohn Trailhead is at the USFS/BLM boundary fence and cattle guard 9.2 miles south of the junction of Crooked Creek Road and Pryor Mountain Road (#2308). The Penney Trailhead is 3.3 miles south of the USFS/BLM boundary.

Penney Trailhead (Elevation 4,770 ft.):

This trailhead is 2.9 miles north of the Junction of Crooked Creek Rd. and Helt Rd. Driving north shortly before the trailhead the road turns right for a short distance, climbs out of the valley to a flat and turns left. Park on the right (east) side of the road. No trail is visible. The summit block of Penney Peak is visible on the skyline to the east. (See maps and **photos #1, 2, & 3.**)



1. Crooked Creek Rd: Climb and left turn at Trailhead.



2. Parking area at Penney Trailhead.

3. Telephoto of Penney Peak from Penney Trailhead on Crooked Creek Rd.



Penney Peak Hike:

The panoramic view from Penney Peak includes the SE face of Big Pryor Mountain, the SW slopes of East Pryor Mountain, a dramatic basin of 250 million year old, deep red Chugwater shale and sandstone, the Crooked Creek Valley, and the Bighorn Mountains. The hike is about 2 miles round trip and climbs about 300 ft. elevation to 5,040 ft.

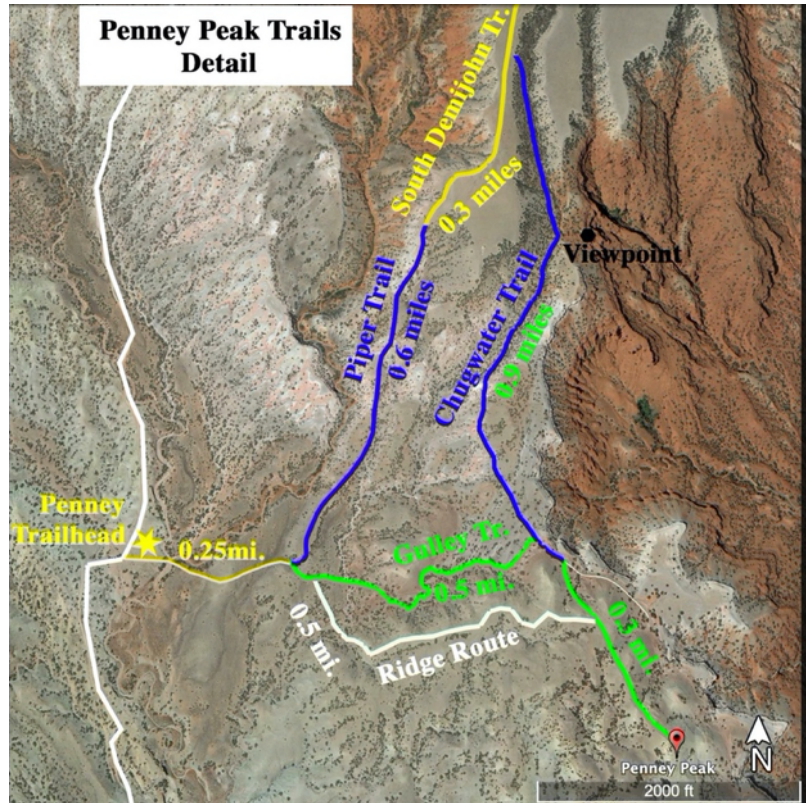
You can see the summit of Penney Peak from the trailhead. But there is no actual trail to Penney Peak. The following is an interesting and easy route:

See Google Earth (GE) views to right and below.

The Gulley Route:

1. No trail may be visible from the Penney Trailhead parking area. Walk (yellow line on GE View) about 100 yds east to a (usually) dry wash that drains south. Just to the north three drainages join to form this single channel. Cross at the top of the single channel. On the east side of the wash an old two-track route is visible. (See **photo #4**)

2. Follow this two-track as it curves to the right into a draw in the low hills. (See **photo #5**). A short way up this draw you may note faint signs of another two-track curving to the left. This junction is about ¼ mile from the trailhead. (See **photo #6**) Continue on the right track (green on GE view) to the flat above. The left track (blue on GE view) is an old, long-abandoned route up to Demijohn Flat. (More on that route, which we call the Piper Trail, below.)



Google Earth Map View.



4. Looking back across wash to Penney Trailhead parking area.

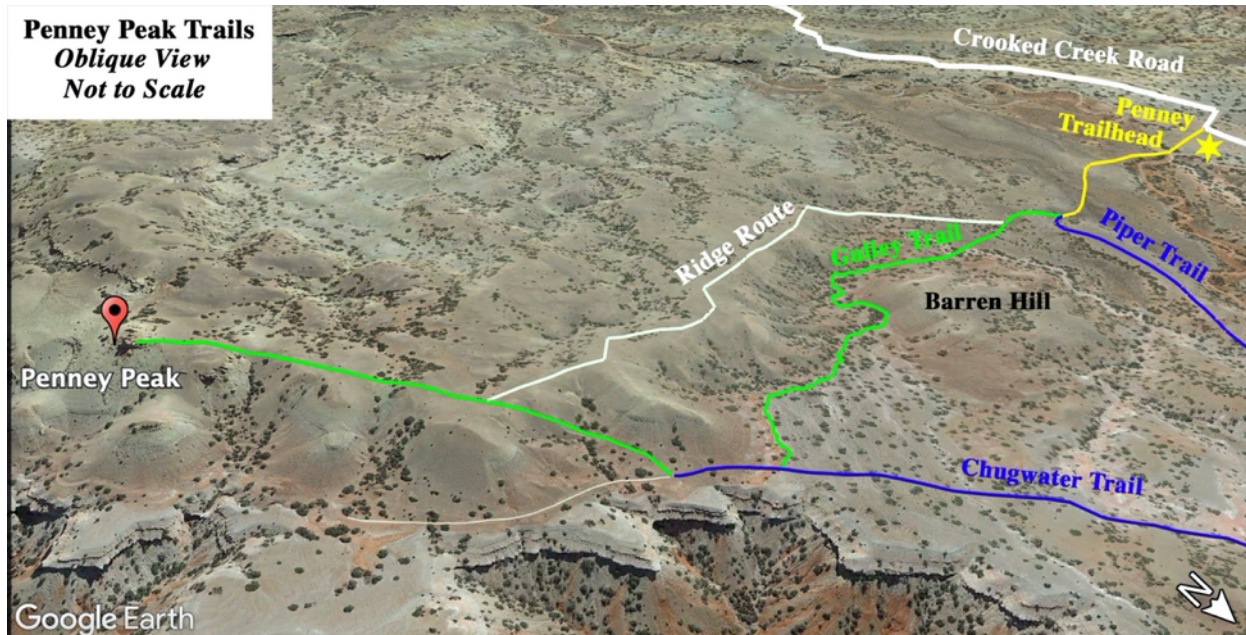


5. Looking east: track curves right into draw.



6. Junction: Right to Penney Peak. Left Piper Trail to Demijohn Flat

3. Continue following the track eastish about 0.1 mile to another dry wash draining south. Cross the wash and continue eastish following the track if and where visible. In about another 0.1 mile pass south of a high (~100 ft.), steep and rather barren hill on the left, and north of a long, roughly east-west ridge on the right. See the green Gully Trail in the GE view below.



Google Earth View – looking obliquely southwest. Use this view to understand the topography along the Gully and Ridge Trails

4. The wash or gully, for which this route is named, drains from the east and meanders near the base, and south of, the barren hill mentioned above. Walk up the bottom of the gully, following some meanders, and on east roughly paralleling the (~ 100 ft high) ridge to the south. (See **photos #7 and #8**) Roughly ¼ mile from the barren hill watch for a faint two-track crossing the wash. This is the Chugwater Trail from Demijohn Flat. Follow it to the right (southish) for about 100 yards until you come to an overlook view of the deep red Chugwater Formation. (See **photo #9**). (If you miss the Chugwater track and continue east you will very soon come to the same overlook, just north of the photo point.)



7. Wash: Walking downstream (west). Barren hill in the distance



8. Wash: Near top (east end). Looking east.



9. Overlook: Red Chugwater. Looking north. Start climb south to Penney Peak.

5. The two-track continues (thin faint white line on GE view). Instead leave the track and begin the climb to Penney Peak (green on GE view). The peak is out of sight to the SSE - almost exactly opposite Big Pryor Mountain to the NNW. Head S or SE up the steep grassy slope and on to the summit. From the viewpoint where you leave the Chugwater track it is about 1/3 mile to the top of Penney Peak.

Return hike to Penney Trailhead:

Gulley Route: Begin heading NNW from the peak toward Big Pryor Mountain, and then reverse sections 5 through 1 above.

Alternative **Ridge Route loop return:** Follow the white line along the top of the ridge in the GE view. There is no trail.

Demijohn Flat Trail Network:

Demijohn Trailhead (Elevation 5,850 ft.):

This trailhead is on the east side of Crooked Creek Road, a few feet south of the USFS/BLM border fence and cattleguard, and 3.3 miles north of the Penney Trailhead. (See **photos 10 A & B.**) The trail is the obvious two-track behind the green metal gate heading a little east of south.



10 A. Demijohn Trailhead: Looking south from the cattle guard at the BLM/USFS boundary.



10 B. Demijohn Flat Trail behind the gate.

Demijohn Flat Trail:

The Demijohn Flat Trail is open to foot travel (human and horse), but closed to public wheeled use (mountain bikes and/or motor vehicles). The Trail begins at the Demijohn Trailhead on Crooked Creek Rd. at the USFS /BLM boundary. It goes south-southeast, gently down the flat for 1.5 miles to a junction where the South Demijohn Trail forks to the south end of Demijohn Flat. After another 0.3 miles (1.8 miles from the trailhead) the Demijohn Flat Trail reaches the east edge of the Flat and Crooked Creek Canyon at 5,320 ft. elevation - just over 500 feet below the trailhead. (See GE view on page 1.)

Crooked Creek Trail:

Starting at the end of the Demijohn Flat Trail the Crooked Creek Trail drops steeply from the Flat into Crooked Creek Canyon (see **photos 11 & 12**). About 1/3 mile, and more than 300 ft. elevation down, there are good views from the cliff tops of Crooked Creek - another 300 or more feet below. The trail continues down and south. Remnants of the old track continue south for about two miles (from Demijohn Flat) to the Tillett Ranch (private).



11. & 12. The Crooked Creek Trail drops into the canyon at the end of the Demijohn Flat Trail.

South Demijohn Trail:

Beginning 1.5 miles from the Demijohn Trailhead on the Demijohn Flat Trail (see **photo 13**), the South Demijohn Trail goes 0.9 miles to where the Chugwater Trail forks to the left, and another 0.3 miles (1.2 miles and about 170 ft elevation drop from its beginning of the south DJ trail) to the end of a south finger of Demijohn Flat. The Piper Trail continues from there down to the Penney Trailhead on Crooked Creek Road.

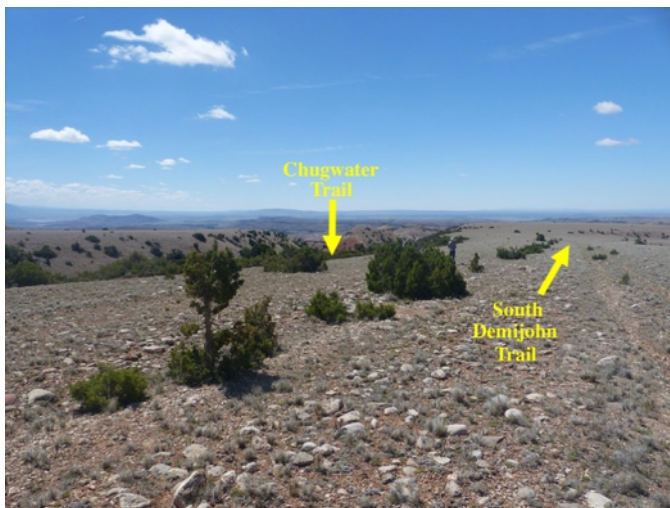


13. Beginning of South Demijohn Trail. "Road Closed" "Foot & Horse Travel Permitted."

Chugwater Trail:

The Chugwater Trail forks down into a substantial drainage east of the South Demijohn Trail. It's *beginning is not obvious* from the South Demijohn Trail. From the gap in the junipers (**photo #15**) at the edge of the drainage the trail is easily identified. Note the landmark juniper bushes in **photos 14 & 15**. Most of the trail is easy to follow once it is found. (See **photos 16 & 17**.)

Note that photo 14 is looking south. It looks different for hikers approaching from the south from the Piper Trail. The GPS coordinates for the north end of the Chugwater Trail are **45.05618°N, 108.40343°W**.



14. & 15. The juniper left of the arrow head in the left photo (#14) is the juniper on the left in the right photo (#15)



16. & 17. Chugwater Trail. The arrow points to the Chugwater viewpoint.

About 1/3 mile down the Chugwater Trail, the east wall of the drainage opens to a view of ruggedly eroded, deep red Chugwater Formation. A spectacular viewpoint is obvious about a hundred yards off the trail to the east.

*18. to the right:
A less obvious section of the lower Chugwater Trail. The "trail" in the foreground curves left through the notch.*



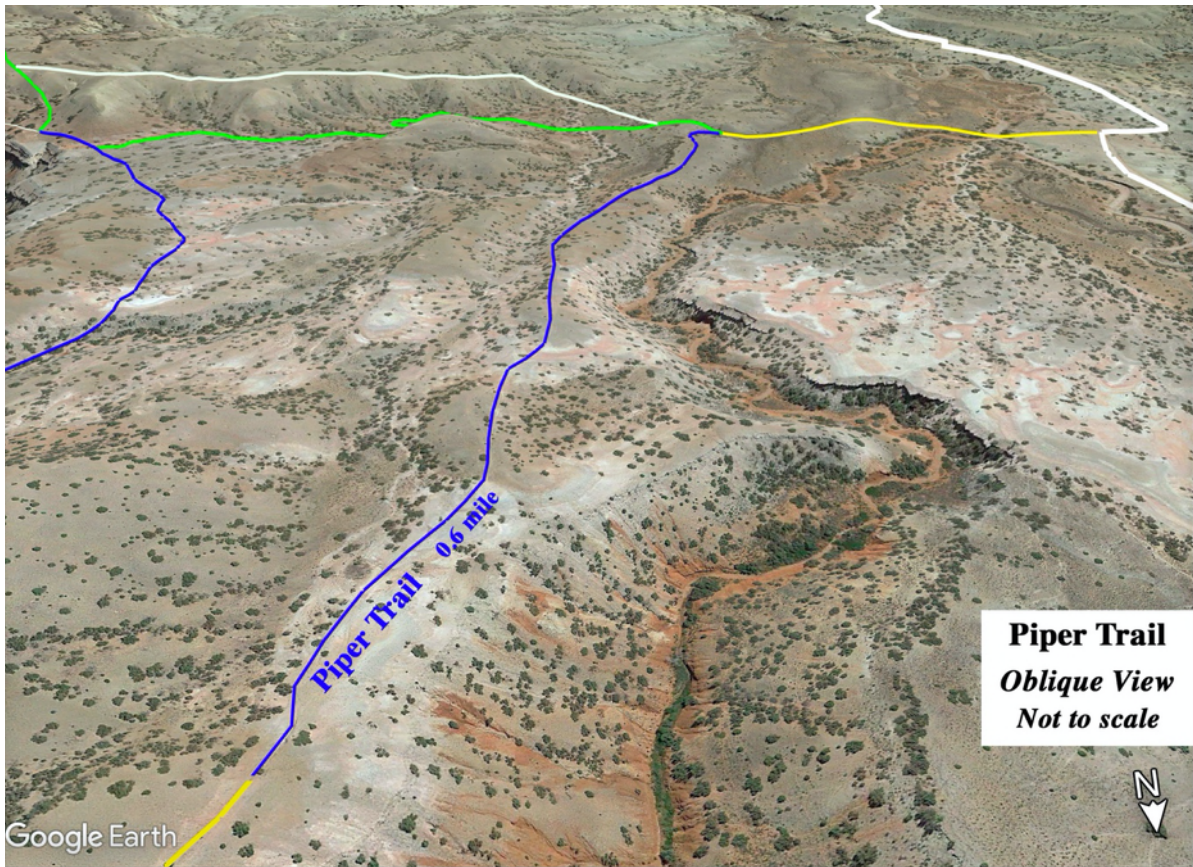
From the South Demijohn Trail junction the Chugwater Trail goes mostly south for a total of 0.9 miles to where it crosses a wash and intersects the Penney Peak Gulley Trail. From there it is about 0.3 mile to the top of Penney Peak. (See Penney Peak Hike route description above.)

Piper Trail:

The Piper Trail is named for the geologic Piper Formation. One-quarter mile east of the Penney Trailhead (top right in GE view below) the south end of the Piper Trail (top center in GE view below) curves north from the trail to Penney Peak. It heads mostly north and in 0.6 miles climbs to the south finger of Demijohn Flat and becomes the South Demijohn Trail (bottom left in GE view below).

The abandoned two-track which the Piper follows is not always obvious. See steps 1 & 2 of the Penney Peak Gulley Route description, and *especially photo #7* of the junction where the Piper Trail leaves the Penney Peak Trail (page 4 above). The GPS coordinates of the junction at the south end of the Piper Trail are 45.044507°N, 108.410866°W.

Note in the oblique Google Earth (GE) view below that the Piper Trail mostly follows a ridge just east of a significant drainage channel.



GE oblique view of Piper Trail looking south.

IMPORTANT NOTE:

All of the routes east of Crooked Creek Road are within areas formally designated by BLM as Wilderness Study Area (WSA) or Lands with Wilderness Characteristics (LWC). Only foot travel (human or horse) is permitted. None of these routes are open to mountain bikes or public motorized use. The objective is to preserve the natural wilderness character of the area. The Demijohn Flat Trail is available for (infrequent) administrative vehicle use by BLM. If you observe violations of these restrictions, please report to the Bureau of Land Management. Provide all the details you can: date, location, vehicle types and numbers etc.