

## Upper Layout Creek Trail

This trail is in Bighorn Canyon National Recreation Area (BCNRA)

The BCNRA website describes other hikes in the area. <http://www.nps.gov/bica/planyourvisit/hiking.htm>

Layout Creek flows out of a deep canyon on the precipitous east face of East Pryor Mountain. It is one of the few permanent streams in the Pryors. The trail climbs the increasingly steep slopes to the jagged limestone cliffs of Sykes Ridge. Sometimes the trail is on open slopes high above the creek. Other places it is close to the creek and several small waterfalls. There are expansive views of Bighorn canyon and the Bighorn Mountains beyond. As Layout Creek Canyon narrows these views are framed by vertical canyon walls. Finally the trail enters thick timber and ends at Layout Creek Springs where the creek begins and tumbles in multiple streams and falls down the side of the canyon.

*Please treat the spring area and its vegetation very carefully. This is a rare and fragile riparian microhabitat in the near desert around it. Such habitats can have great biodiversity dependent on a narrow range of environmental conditions. This includes species from plants to specialized aquatic invertebrates. Wyoming sullivania (Sullivania hapemanii) grows here and in a few similar places nearby, but nowhere else in the world. The unique ecosystem is highly vulnerable to damage by human activity. Please do not walk or climb on the wet spring or waterfall areas. If each visitor "accidentally" damages a few plants, there will soon be none.*

The hike to Layout Creek Springs is 4.4 miles round trip (elevation gain 1,300 ft.). This is a great hike for spring and fall. It can be relatively snow free even in February up to where the canyon narrows and the trail enters the trees close to the spring.

Unlike most access to the Pryors, there is a good paved road all the way to the Upper Layout Creek trailhead. There is no need for a high clearance or 4WD vehicle. But from Billings MT it is a long drive around three sides of the Pryors – approximately 120 miles and at least 2 hours. The drive from Lovell WY north into Bighorn Canyon NRA provides excellent scenic views of the south slopes of the Pryor Mountains and of the rugged east face of Sykes Ridge. A short side trip to Devil's Canyon Overlook is well worth the time.

### Getting to the Trailhead:

From the only stoplight in Lovell WY follow Main Street (Hwy. 310) east 0.5 mile to the junction with Hwy 14.

Turn left onto Hwy. 14 at the junction. The BCNRA Visitors' Center is on the right in 0.1 mile.

From the BCNRA Visitors' Center drive 2.4 miles east on Hwy 14 to the brown Bighorn Canyon National Recreation Area sign at the junction with WY 37.

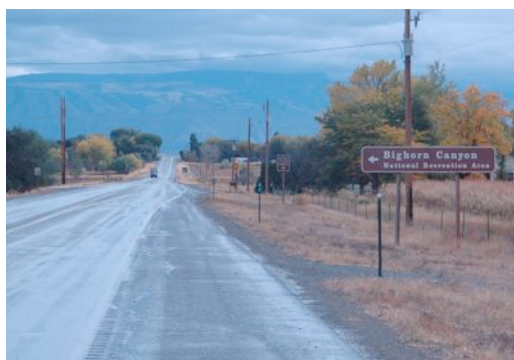
**0.0 miles:** Turn left (north) onto WY 37.

**9.1 miles:** BCNRA entrance

**9.6 miles:** Automated Fee Station. Vehicle pass: \$5/day. Use a credit card. Cash is not accepted. (You can pay with cash at the Visitors' Center.)

**15.4 miles:** Turn off to Devil's Canyon Overlook.

**20.0 miles:** Ewing-Snell Historic Ranch. Turn left into onto the gravel road. It is about 1,000 ft. to the Upper Layout Creek trailhead. Drive past the toilets to the corrals and a display of old farm machinery. Park on the right opposite the corrals.



## The Pryors Coalition

### The Hike:

**0.0 miles:** Trailhead north of the corral. Elevation: 4,220 ft. Follow gravel road through gate.

*It is possible (and allowed by BCNRA) to drive the first 1.2 miles on this gravel road. The road is in pretty good condition (10/6/11), but we suggest walking. It is a nice walk. And the parking is very limited at the end. We would like to see BCNRA close this section to public motorized use.*

**1.2 miles:** End of gravel road. Elevation: 4,720 ft. Gain: about 500 ft.

*In October 2011 there were frequent trail markers along the trail from this point on. They are brown posts with white arrows and say "Upper Layout Creek Trail." The posts are held up by piles of rocks, but some had fallen down.*

From the end of the gravel road a two track trail turns left (south), down a short hill and swings right (west). It soon becomes a single track trail.



**1.3 miles:** Steel culvert and creek crossing. The creek goes through a culvert. Turn left over the culvert to cross the creek. Push through the brush, and follow the rough trail up out of the drainage on the south side. In about 100 ft you should be out of the brushy drainage. The trail should be fairly obvious turning right (west) paralleling the creek.



**2.2 miles:** Layout Creek Springs and falls. Elevation: 5,550 ft. Total gain: about 1300 ft.

### Upper Layout Creek Trail Map.

Ewing-Snell Historic Ranch is labeled "Layout Creek Ranger Station" on map. The end of the gravel road is at the red diamond in the middle of the trail. The culvert is at the crook in the trail just west of that diamond.

