



United States Department of Agriculture
Forest Service



PACIFIC SOUTHWEST REGION

Restoring, Enhancing and Sustaining Forests in California, Hawaii and the Pacific Islands

Sierra National Forest

Lewis Creek Trail Bass Lake Ranger District

WELCOME

The Bass Lake Ranger District has two designated National Recreation Trails, the Lewis Creek Trail and the Shadow of the Giants Trail, both within minutes of the Oakhurst, Bass Lake and North Fork areas. The Lewis Creek Trail is a beautiful, peaceful trail designated in 1982 as a part of the National Recreation Trails System. The 3.7 mile long trail is within walking distance of State Highway 41, four miles north of Oakhurst. There are trail-heads at each end and one in the middle, allowing a choice of travel patterns. From north to south the elevation ranges from 4,240 to 3,360 feet, a change of 880 feet.

Hiking takes place mainly in the spring, summer and fall (May through November) with winter accessibility when snow permits. When walking the trail from bottom to top during warm months, be sure to have at least two quarts of water per person and appropriate footwear.

Special features along the trail are Red Rock and Corlieu Falls and the old lumber flume route. Fishing is good below Corlieu Falls.

HIKING AND CAMPING

Horses are not prohibited on the trail but riders are advised not to use the lower segment of the trail. Trail bikes are not allowed on the trail. Dispersed camping is permitted within the area. A campfire permit is required if using stoves, hibachis or campfire rings. Pack out all garbage and trash that you pack in.

HISTORY

Most of the trail follows along the route of the old Madera-Sugar Pine Lumber Company flume that extended from the Sugar Pine Lumber Mill in Sugar Pine to the north of the trail, southwest to the San Joaquin Valley town of Madera.

The sawed boards were floated down the "V" shaped flume to the railroad line in Madera. At many places along its route, the flume was built upon wooden trestles as high as 60 feet above the ground. A catwalk only ten inches wide along the flume enabled the "herder" to keep the lumber moving. The lumber was held together with large iron staple-like clamps.

The flume operated from 1900 to 1931, with over 1 billion board feet of lumber passing down the 54 mile flume. Today, little remains of the once massive mill operation: the log pond, concrete powerhouse and some converted cabins in the village of Sugar Pine.

Although the mill closed in 1933, in its heyday Madera Sugar Pine was not only an important economic force, but a powerful social magnet as well. It drew many people to the area among these was Charles Clifford Corlieu (1861-1921).

In the early 1870s, Corlieu moved to California from Missouri and began ranching in the Auberry Valley near Shaver Lake. This multi-talented man maintained a lifelong affection for the outdoors. While logging, he developed a stopover for travelers, complete with restaurant, store, post office and corral, which became Corlieu Meadows.

In later years, Corlieu made a trip to Sugar Pine to visit one of his grown daughters and fell in love with the area. Corlieu was especially taken with the mineral warm springs along Lewis Creek.



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He filed mineral claims on the adjacent land and built a cabin on the hill overlooking the falls, dubbing himself the "Cliff Man." The spring water was piped into a large pothole, creating a natural hot tub. His family and their friends visited often.

In his last years of peaceful retirement, Corlieu wrote a book of verse speaking of his love for God, his fellow man and the glories of nature. The surroundings which inspired him can be enjoyed today along this trail.

In the 1930s, a resort was built near the trail at Corlieu Falls. The resort and guest cabins were removed in the early 1940s. After the resort, Corlieu's son-in-law opened a museum-restaurant on one of the trailheads near the resort. He filed about 20 mining claims along the trail, sold as building lots and 20 illegal cabins and homes were built. In the 1960s the museum and cabins were removed and the area allowed to return to its natural condition.

For more information please contact:

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