

Churn Creek has a rich history; it has been home to First Nations people for at least 6,000 years. It saw the influx of packers and miners, including industrious Chinese miners whose ditch work can still be viewed and it has been actively ranched since the early 1860s. The Protected Area was established in 1994 through the Cariboo Chilcotin Land Use Plan, which specifies that cattle grazing will continue. With the 1998 acquisition of the Empire Valley Ranch lands, Churn Creek Protected Area totals 36,100 hectares.

The Churn Creek Management Plan resulted from a two-year public process. Grazing will be carefully managed to promote the health of the ecosystem. A private company under permit operates the Empire Valley Ranch.

In summer 2000, the dams that formed three of the lakes, and which provide water for hay production, were restored with the help of engineering know-how from Ducks Unlimited. The dams maintain valuable wildlife habitat.

Access

Churn Creek is a remote area with difficult access, involving several hours' driving on rough clay and gravel roads, which become dangerously slick when wet. The easiest route from the Williams Lake area: from Hwy 97 south, take the Enterprise Road to the Dog Creek turnoff (use caution: it's an active logging road). Follow signs for Gang Ranch, which will take you across the Fraser River bridge. At the next intersection, take the left turn onto Empire Valley Road.

From the south, drive north on Hwy 97 from Clinton; follow signs to Big Bar Lake Park. Turn right at the next T-intersection after the park. This leads you through Canoe Creek village and on to the Fraser River bridge. Go left, as above.

Maps

National Topographic Series maps of the Churn Creek area are available at most surveyors' offices and map retailers: 1:250,000: 92 O; 1:50,000: 92 O/7, 92 O/8, 92 O/9, 92 O/10

Facilities

This is a very dry area with no public drinking water. Bring your own. There is a rustic camping area at the Calving Barn on Empire Valley Road that features a pit toilet and corrals. A day-use parking lot with a pit toilet is located just north of the Ranch Headquarters. Please note: the ranch buildings and corrals are closed to the public and there is no public vehicle access beyond the main gate. The closest fuel, public telephone and groceries are available at the Dog Creek Store, 30 minutes' drive from the Fraser River bridge.

Recreational Opportunities

Horseback riding, hiking, and mountain bike riding are all enjoyable ways to explore. The area is very popular with hunters in the fall deer-hunting season.

Visitor Ethics and Safety

- ▶ **Respect road closures.** These are signed and gated. Some roads are industrial accesses; others may be closed because they lead to particularly fragile areas.
- ▶ **No off-road travel in motor vehicles is permitted.**
- ▶ **The designated roads become dangerous when wet,** and washouts may occur. Avoid driving when roads are wet unless you have four-wheel drive, shovel and chains.
- ▶ **ATVs and unlicensed motor bikes are prohibited** under the *Wildlife Act* and *Park Act*.
- ▶ **Walk or ride on existing trails** to avoid damaging the fragile grassland ecosystem.
- ▶ **Do not trespass on the private property** shown on the map. The protected area supports an operating ranch. Do not drive over hayfields, and watch for cattle.
- ▶ **Obey the Hunting Regulations** published by the Ministry of Environment.
- ▶ **Use a portable stove** for cooking. If you must have a fire, use existing campfire rings and burn only dead and down wood. Ensure the fire is fully extinguished – this is dry country.
- ▶ **Respect wildlife.** Do not cause stress by approaching animals closely. Use binoculars and a telephoto lens.
- ▶ **Keep pets under control.** Never allow pets to harass wildlife or livestock.
- ▶ **Avoid attracting bears** by keeping a clean camp and storing food out of their reach. Pack out all your garbage.

For More Information

BC Parks

<http://wlapwww.gov.bc.ca/bcparks>



Ministry of Water, Land
and Air Protection



Churn Creek

P R O T E C T E D A R E A



Welcome. Churn Creek Protected Area conserves a large and varied expanse of bunchgrass habitat. Many vulnerable species depend on grasslands for survival, such as California bighorn sheep, sharp-tailed grouse and long-billed curlew. In this bunchgrass ecosystem, grasses and flowers are interspersed with tiny lichens that help to stabilize the soil. These lichens are extremely fragile, and take many years to recover from vehicle damage. BC Parks manages recreational uses to ensure minimal impacts on the habitat.

Cariboo/Chilcotin/Coast