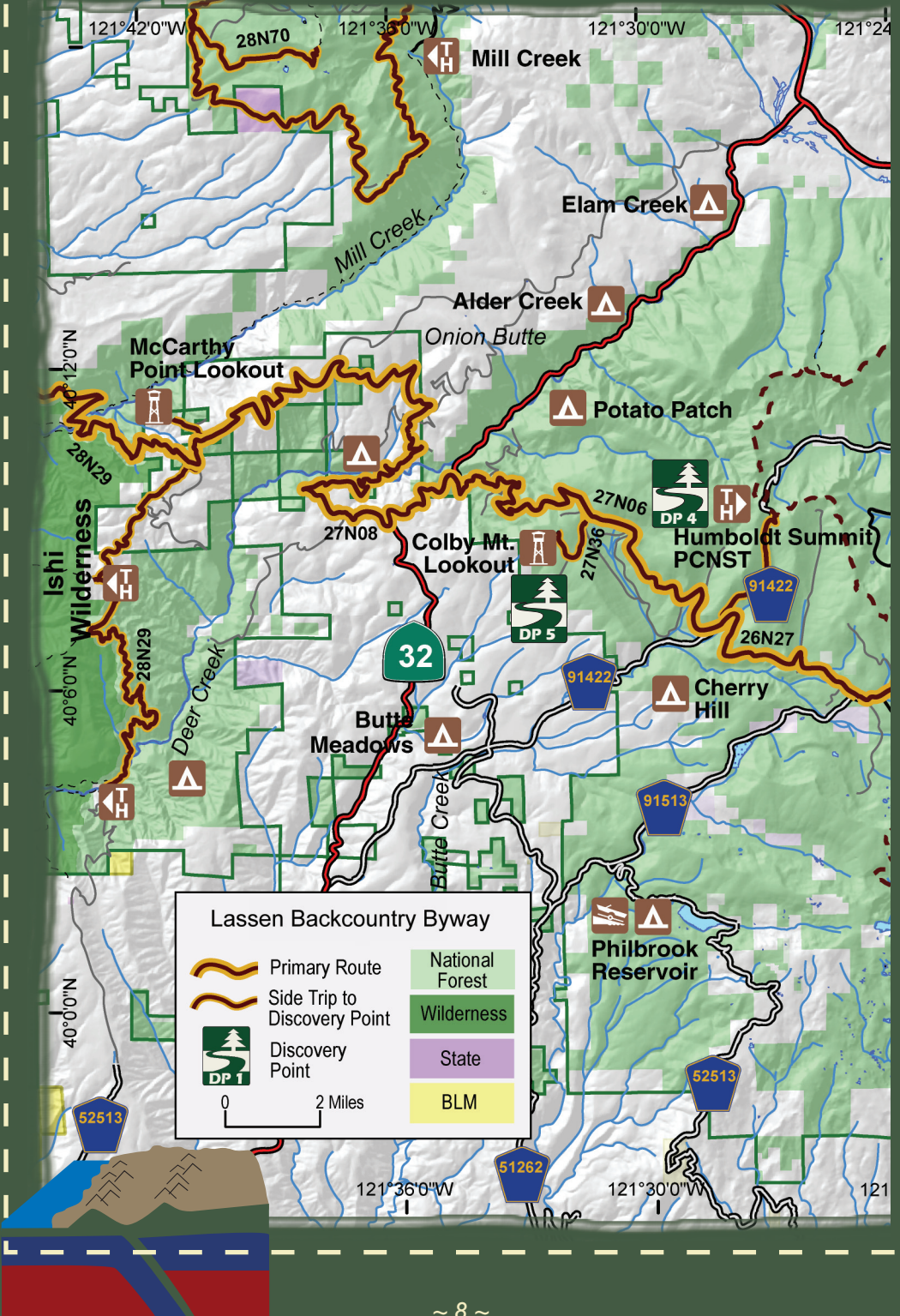
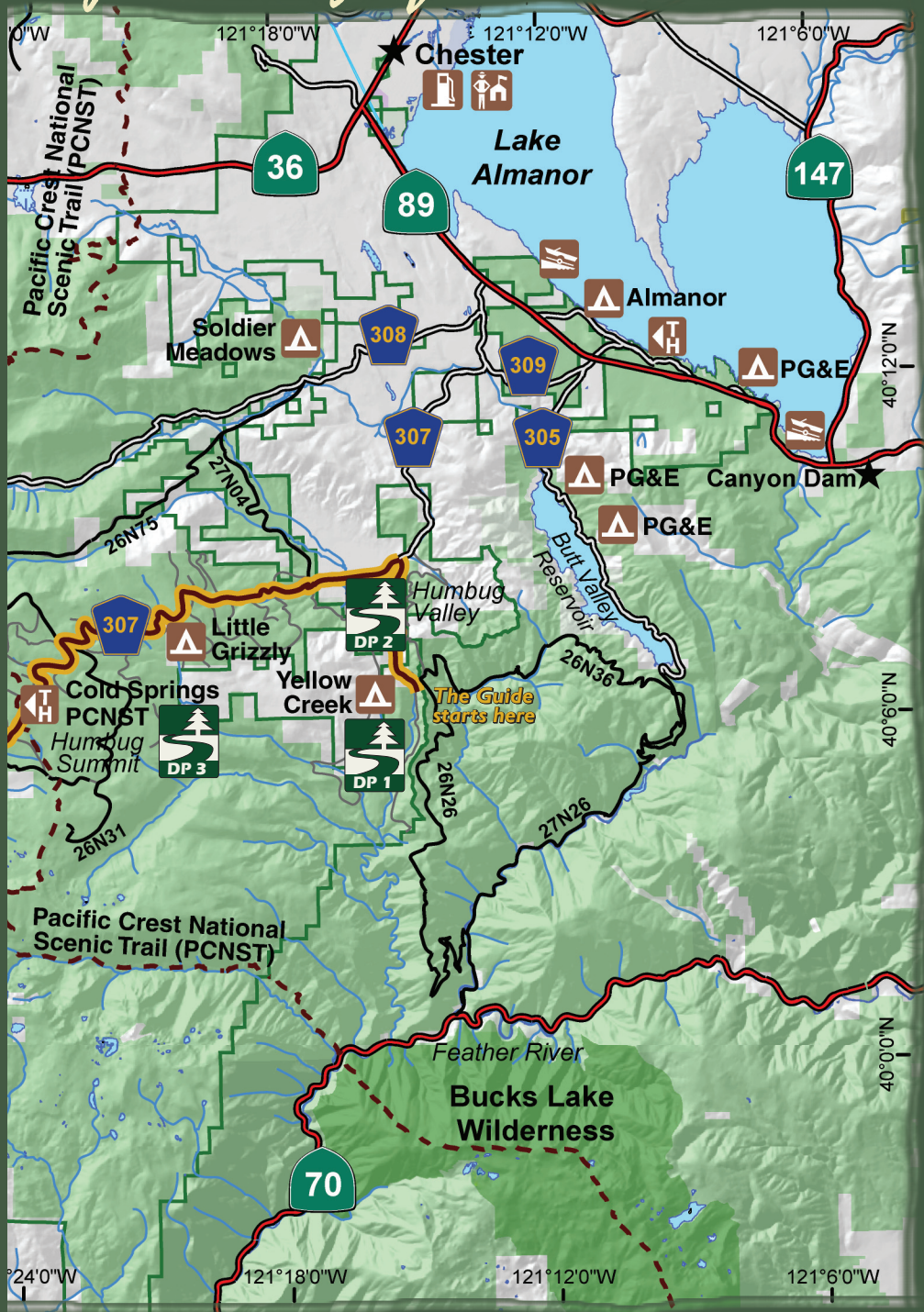


# Sierra Nevada



# A Gathering of Natural Forces



# Sierra Nevada

## A Gathering of Natural Forces



Section I

Discovery Points 1-5

Distance - 37.0 miles

*Crashing continents and exploding volcanoes, mountains growing and eroding. Deep turbulences within the earth have generated forces at the western edge of the North American continent over the last 200 million years, strong enough to bring a mountain range into being. **Welcome to the Sierra Nevada!***

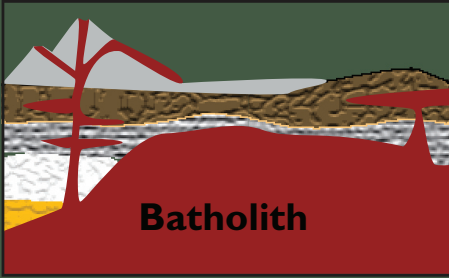
### Reading Earth's Forms

Sierra Nevada geology is perfectly revealed in the first 37 miles of the Lassen Backcountry Byway.

Running 250 miles long and 50 miles wide, the range tilts up along its eastern edge, exposing its history in huge granite boulders. Look for mica, quartz, and feldspar soils – remnants of granite that have succumbed to ages of weather.

Look also for evidence of the vast inland sea that once weighed heavily on this part of the earth's crust. You'll see clues in plant and animal fossils, pushed upward by molten magma as it slowly cooled beneath the earth's surface.





Once cooled, this magma became a mass of rock called a ***batholith***, and extends hundreds of miles deep.

Another clue to the Sierra Nevada's geologic history is the occurrence of unusual plant species on the east sides of Yellow and Grizzly Creeks, many

of which are on the Forest Service's Sensitive Plant list. These plants can live here courtesy of ***rare serpentine soils***. Serpentine soils originated as muddy ooze in the Pacific Ocean that got scraped off the oceanic plate when it was forced over the continental plates.

### ***Serpentine soil plant species in this area***

- ✦ *Cut-leaved ragwort (Packeria eurycephalas var. lewisrosei)*
- ✦ *Feather River stonecrop (Sedum albomarginatum)*
- ✦ *Constance's rock cress (Arabis constancei)*
- ✦ *Follett's monardella (Monardella folletti).*



*Cut-leaved ragwort*

***These plants receive special emphasis by land managers to ensure their conservation.***

As you travel the Lassen Backcountry Byway, look for more signs of the earth's inner muscle and clout underlying the splendor of the mountains.




### **Mile 0.0**

**Lat/Long 40° 6' 44"N, 121° 14' 6"W**

**To reach the beginning of the Lassen Backcountry Byway, travel SR 89 along Lake Almanor. Turn west on Plumas County 308 for 0.6 miles, then left on Plumas County 307 for 6.4 miles. You are now at Mile 3.7 on the primary route and may wish to start your travels here.**






**To reach Mile 0.0, turn left on FS 26N26 and go 3.1 miles to FS 26N49 (not shown on map). Turn left and drive to Mile 0.0 at the boundary between the Lassen and Plumas National Forests. The Lassen Backcountry Byway begins here!**

as a state wild trout stream and a trophy brown trout fishery. For regulations and maps, contact the California Department of Fish and Game.

Why not spend the night at Yellow Creek Campground? This 12-unit campground is operated by Pacific Gas and Electric and has restrooms and potable water.




**Mile 0.7  
 Lat/Long 40° 6' 32"N,  
 121° 14' 12"W**


**Mile 3.3  
 Lat/Long 40° 08' 31"N,  
 121° 14' 39"W**

Thanks to a partnership among Pacific Gas and Electric, California Department of Fish and Game, and the Forest Service, the lower 12 miles of Yellow Creek have been restored and established

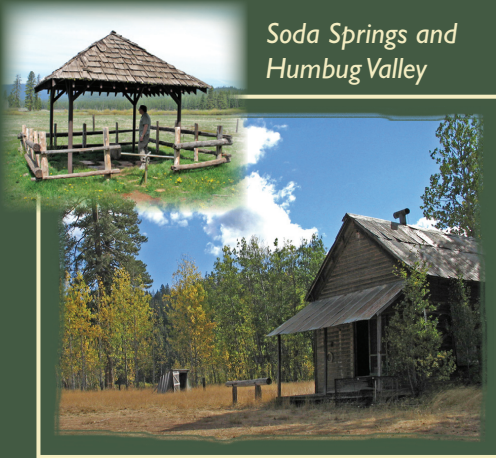
Long before the arrival of Euro-Americans, the Humbug Valley and Soda Springs were used by the Maidu Indians for ceremonial purposes. The Maidu people still live and work in the northern Sierra Nevada and foothill regions.



Yellow Creek

Settlers, miners, and homesteaders arrived in the late 1840s, but only a few families wintered in the valley. That changed after the Humbug Valley Wagon Road was built in the early 1850s to link Big Meadows (now Lake Almanor) with Oroville. By 1854, an estimated 3,300 people and 83,000 head of livestock had traveled the road. It was later used

by gold seekers in the late 1850s traveling from California to the Idaho gold fields.



*Soda Springs and Humbug Valley*

✦ **Mile 3.7**  
Turn left on Plumas County 307

✦ **Mile 5.6**  
At this intersection, FS 27N04 is to your right and FS 26N08 to your left. Continue straight on the graveled Plumas County 307.

✦ **Mile 5.7**  
You're at the intersection with FS 27N37. Stay right and continue climbing the hill on Plumas County 307.

✦ **Mile 9.4**  
Little Grizzly Campground access on FS 26N32 is on the left.

**There is no restroom or potable water.**

✦ **Mile 15.0**  
This is Humbug Summit, the end of Plumas County 307 and the beginning of Butte County 91513. The primary route continues on Plumas County 91513. Turn right on FS 26N27.



*Penstemon (Penstemon speciosus)*



✦ **Mile 15.5**  
Lat/Long 40° 06' 04"N,  
121° 23' 13"W

Here is one of the many points on the Lassen National Forest where you can access the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail, a 2,650-mile nationally designated route connecting Mexico to Canada. Motorized and mechanized vehicles are prohibited.



Take a look at the green lichen on the fir tree trunks. It stops growing at about six feet – the average level of the winter snow pack!



**Mile 21.9**

Turn left onto Butte County 91422 (paved) to follow the main Lassen Backcountry Byway.

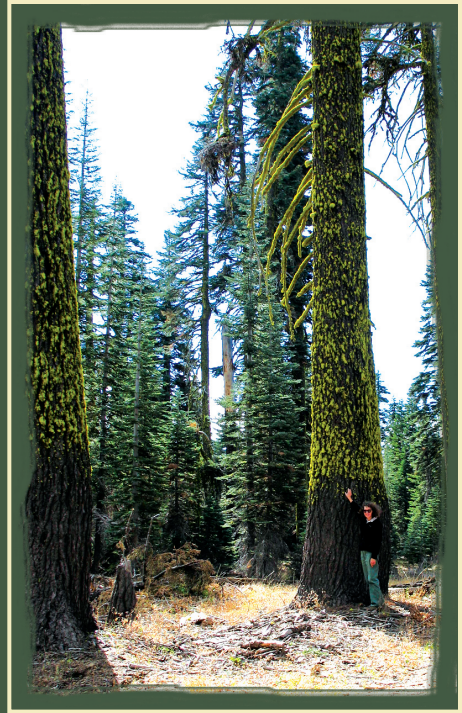
Or, turn right on 91422 (gravel) and go 3.4 miles east to Humboldt Summit.



**Side trip - Hiking**  
Elevation 5,388 feet  
Lat/Long 40° 07' 12"N,  
121° 27' 22"W

**Lassen Peak (10,457 feet)**  
is visible in the Cascade Range.

In 1863, a toll road was constructed from Chico to Honey Lake. The road ran north from Chico through Butte Meadows, over Humboldt Summit, and then easterly along Butt Creek to the present town of Westwood. It then joined Nobles' Road in Susanville. Hike the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail down a

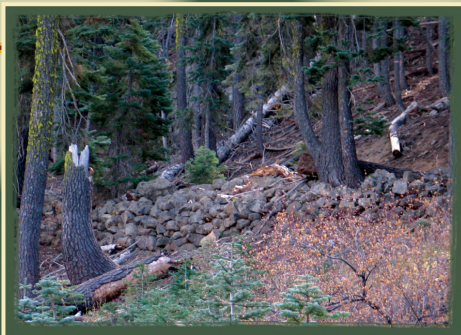


Winter snow pack prevents lichen growth

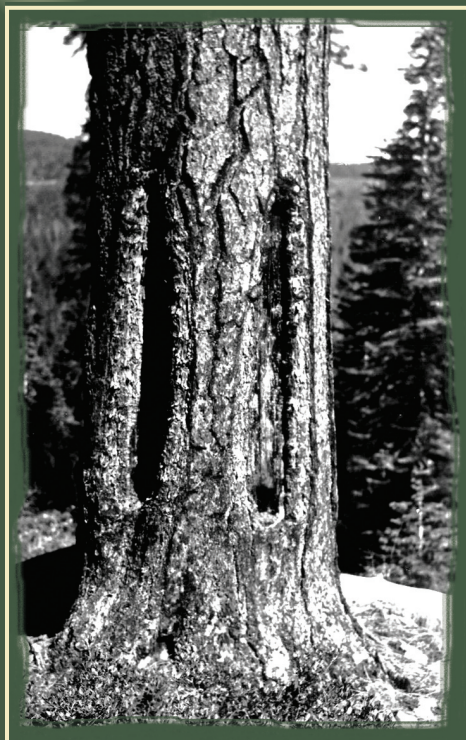
short distance from the summit to see stone retaining walls - remnants of the original wagon road.

Consider the following conditions for early travelers:

*“The first saddle train from Chico to Idaho, via Susanville, left Chico on April 3, 1865 in command of Captain Pierce ... Passengers riding on the hurricane deck of a mule paid a fare of \$66. This included the use of a roll of blankets to sleep under and the carrying of a supply of provisions.” (Merrill Fairfield, A History of Lassen County, 1916)*



*Remnants of Humboldt Toll Road*



*"Turpentine tree"*

Along Section I of the Lassen Backcountry Byway, you might see scarred ponderosa pines. These pines were tapped for their pitch, used to make turpentine during the Civil War. South Carolina's secession deprived the Union of resins and turpentine used in treating and sealing the wooden warships. The Sierra Nevada ponderosa pines provided an alternative source until the end of the Civil War.



**When you descend Humboldt Summit, turn right onto 91422. Go 3 miles to the intersection with 27N06. Stay to the right on 27N06.**







**Mile 27.7**  
**Colby Mountain Lookout**  
 can be accessed from this intersection. Turn left on 27N36 and drive 1.7 miles to the Forest Service Lookout.

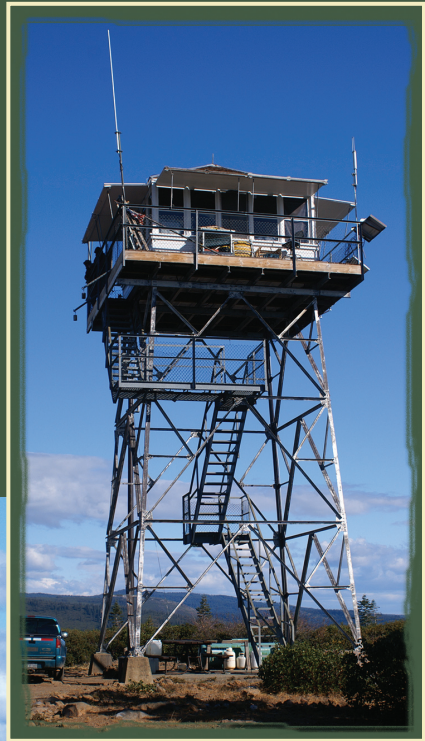


**↖ Side trip - Climb the Lookout**  
 Elevation 5,597 feet  
 Lat/Long 40° 07' 12"N,  
 121° 30' 44"W

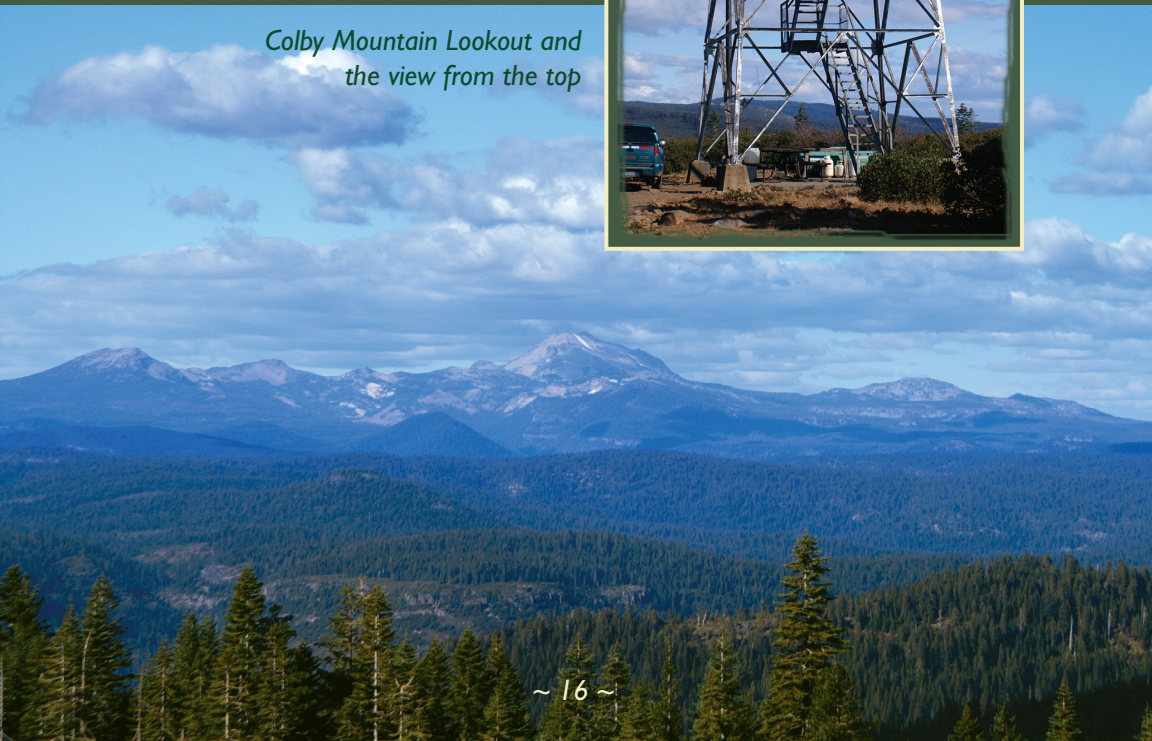
Originally built in 1912 and replaced by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in 1934, the Colby Mountain structure

is now on the National Historic Lookout Register. Summer visitors can climb the tower and learn more of its history.

As you drive to the Lookout, you may see orange trail markers high in the trees. This road is a popular winter trail for snowmobilers and cross-country skiers.



*Colby Mountain Lookout and the view from the top*





### Mile 34.4

Lat/Long 40° 9' 47"N,  
121° 33' 42"W

To start the “Land of Ishi” section of the Lassen Backcountry Byway, turn left onto SR 32 (paved) and head toward Chico, CA. Turning right will take you back to Chester (29 miles).



Be prepared for water crossings.  
(Photo at Antelope Creek)



Going to the right, you will cross Deer Creek in 0.9 miles. After another 1.5 miles (2.6 miles from the main route), you will see Potato Patch Campground on Deer Creek. This newly reconstructed campground has 30 paved

camping spurs, vault restrooms, potable water, and a trail to a picnic area along the creek.



### Mile 37.0

This is the intersection of SR 32 and FS 27N06. Gas, food, and lodging are available in Chico, 36 miles west.

**Remember: The past belongs to the future,  
but only the present can preserve it.**

*Traveling the Lassen Backcountry Byway, you may find evidence of prehistoric and historic peoples.*

*Explore the Byway, but leave artifacts and sites as you found them. Removing artifacts, even a single arrowhead or bottle, destroys these ancient stories, much like ripping pages from a book. Vandalizing, excavating, or collecting at archaeological sites are crimes punishable by fines and imprisonment.*

