

## Know Before You Go

Most of the area is composed of Wilderness Study Areas. To preserve the wilderness values that make this area so remarkable, please remember:

- Camping and fires are limited to Slocum Creek campground. Camping is limited to 14 days.
- Overnight backpackers must camp outside of the Area of Critical Environmental Concern.
- All motorized vehicles and bicycles are limited to existing roads and parking areas.
- Horses and other domestic livestock are not allowed in the Area of Critical Environmental Concern.
- The collection of vegetation, rock materials, and firewood is not permitted.
- No drinking water is available.
- Toilets are distributed along the road and at Slocum Creek campground.
- Avoid wet road conditions. High-clearance vehicles are recommended. Large recreation vehicles are not recommended. Flash flood events and winter conditions can make the road inaccessible.

## Geology

The most striking features of Leslie Gulch are the diverse and often stark, towering and colorful geologic formations. The Leslie Gulch Tuff (consolidated volcanic ash), makes up the bulk of these formations. It is a rhyolite ash that erupted from the Mahogany Mountain caldera (a large volcanic depression which encompasses Leslie Gulch) in a series of violent explosions about 15.5 million years ago. Much of the material fell back into the volcano as a gaseous deposit of fine ash and rock fragments up to 1,000 feet thick. About 100,000 years later, volcanic eruptions from the Three Fingers caldera, located several miles to the northeast, deposited another layer of rhyolite tuff in Leslie Gulch. Today, the tuff is beautifully displayed as steep slopes and vertical, honeycombed towers carved over time.

## Recreational Activities

Slocum Creek campground has 12 campsites. Picnic tables are also available. A concrete boat ramp provides Owyhee Reservoir access for small water craft. Hiking, photography, plant and wildlife viewing are all popular activities in this unique canyon setting. Take caution and be prepared for ticks, rattlesnakes, and extreme weather conditions.

## Wildflowers

The talus slopes and unique soils of Leslie Gulch support a number of rare plant species. Two annual species are found only in the Leslie Gulch drainage (Packard's blazing star

and Etter's groundsel). Grimy ivesia, sterile milkvetch, and Owyhee clover are rare perennials found at a few isolated sites in the canyon.

## Wildlife

In 1965, 17 California bighorn sheep were reintroduced into Leslie Gulch. The herd has expanded to over 200 animals. Mule deer and Rocky Mountain elk are also found in the area. Bird watchers can spot chukar, numerous song birds, raptors, California quail, northern flickers, and white-throated swifts. Coyotes, bobcats, bats, and many reptiles, including rattlesnakes, also live in Leslie Gulch.



## Cultural

Native Americans fished, hunted, and camped along the Owyhee River in Leslie Gulch 5,000 years before Europeans came to the area. In 1882, a cattle rancher, Hiram E. Leslie, was struck by lightning while working in what was then known as Dugout Gulch; thus, the area was renamed Leslie Gulch. The original Leslie Gulch Canyon Road long served as a wagon and mail route between Rockville and Watson. Today, the town of Watson lies at the bottom of the Owyhee Reservoir.

## Directions to the Site

The site is located east of the Owyhee Reservoir in Malheur County, Oregon. From Highway 95 in Idaho, go west 8 miles on McBride Creek Road to Rockville, then 1 mile north to Leslie Gulch Road and 15 miles west; **or** take Succor Creek Road from either Oregon Highway 201 or US Highway 95 to the Leslie Gulch Road junction.

## District Contact Information

### Vale District

Bureau of Land Management

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# Leslie Gulch



BLM

Vale District



# Welcome to Leslie Gulch



Towering cliffs painted in desert hues and honeycombed rock formations sculpted over millions of years form the landscape of this remote region. More than

11,000 acres bounded by the watersheds of Leslie, Slocum, Juniper, Dago, and Runaway Gulches are managed by the Bureau of Land Management as an Area of Critical Environmental Concern to protect the outstanding scenery and habitat of California bighorn sheep and several rare plant species.

