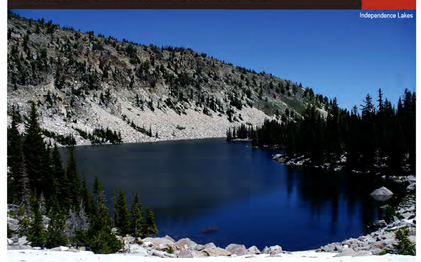
MINIDOKA RANGER DISTRICT


Independence Lakes

The Minidoka Ranger District is divided into Divisions named for the scenic mountain ranges included in each area. The Albion Mountains, Black Pine, Sublett, Raft River, and Cassia Divisions each contain more than 70,000 acres of forested land south of Burley, Idaho, and the northern portion of Utah.

Recreation is undoubtedly the most popular pursuit on the Minidoka Ranger District. Summer activities include camping, picnicking, hiking, rock climbing, hang gliding, horseback riding, mountain biking, plus all-terrain vehicle trail machine riding. Winter brings opportunities for alpine and Nordic skiing, and snow machine travel. The divisions also provide year-round opportunities for photography, historical study, and scenic driving.

Hunting and fishing are popular activities on the District. Six alpine lakes, three reservoirs, and numerous streams are within the District boundaries. Forested areas and rangeland provide habitat for wildlife species including mule deer, moose, elk, wild turkey, bobcat, cougar, many small mammals, and a wide variety of birds. Over 10,000 head of sheep and 19,000 head of cattle graze on the District each year.

Firewood gathering and cutting of Christmas trees for personal use are other opportunities for visitors to the District. Commercial operators harvest sawtimber each year.

Mining for gold, silver, copper, lead, zinc, and many other minerals has occurred on the Sawtooth National Forest since the mid-1800's. While early-day mining was focused predominately in the northern mining towns of the Stanley Basin, prospectors were busy striking claims and actively mining lead and silver on what is now the Minidoka Ranger District.

Gold was discovered on the Ranger District in the 1930's. Over 100,000 tons of microscopic gold-bearing ore was produced at the Tolman Mine in the Black Pine Division. In 1990, the Black Pine Mine, owned by Pegasus Gold, began operation.

Rocky Mountain quartzite, better know as "Oakley Stone," has been extensively mined on the Albion Mountain and Raft River Divisions since the early 1900's. By the late 1950's, this thin, durable, colorful stone had been marketed throughout the United States. Today, this unique building stone is in demand worldwide.

Black Pine Division

Many dispersed recreational opportunities are available on the Black Pine Division, located east of the Albion Mountain Division and west of Interstate 84 near the Idaho/Utah border. Although there are limited fishing opportunities, hunting for deer and upland game is popular here. The predominant use of the area is grazing but the area has an extensive history of mining activity.

Since this area does not have as many visitors as some lands located nearer population centers, the pockets of open country offer solitude and refreshment. Northern slopes are occupied by stands of Douglas-fir and subalpine fir. On southern exposures travelers will find juniper, sagebrush, and grasses. The most northern distribution of Single-leaf Pinyon Pine occurs in the southwest corner of the Division.

Sublett Division

The Sublett Division, located east of Interstate 84, offers vast expanses of open sagebrush and grass terrain. Pockets of Douglas-fir on northern exposures and open meadows full of wildflowers make this a good area to take a scenic drive or a horseback trip on an old logging road.

Native trout reside in the streams and Sublett Reservoir adjacent to the Forest boundary. A developed campground is located on Sublett Creek above the Reservoir. Deer are plentiful in this area, and several moose sightings are reported each year.

The miles of trails provide year-round opportunities for recreationists. The Sublett Division is very popular with snowmobile enthusiasts in the winter and ORV riders, hikers, and equestrians in fair weather months.

Most of the water in the Sublett Division is underground. Due to geologic features, water reaches the surface in just a few places. In the 1930's, Forest Service crews constructed cisterns to store the water for use on the adjacent valley floor.

Cache Peak

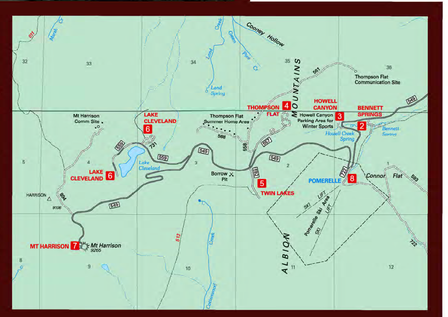
Albion Mountain Division

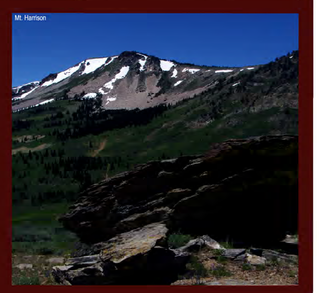
The Albion Mountain Division, located approximately 20 miles southeast of Burley, Idaho, is a popular recreation area. Mount Harrison is the home of an alpine ski resort with a triple and double chair lift. Howell Canyon is a popular snowmobiling area. A warming hut is provided at the winter sports parking area.

After the snow melts, visitors can reach the major developed campgrounds at Thompson Flats, Lake Cleveland, Twin Lakes, and Bennett Springs.

Lake Cleveland, a high alpine lake, is set in a cirque basin – one of two found south of the Snake River. The road continues past the lake to the top of Mt. Harrison, where a Sawtooth fire lookout facility is maintained from July 1 to September 30 each year. This is a popular visitor attraction because of its panoramic view of the surrounding countryside – the mountain ranges of the Sawtooths and the Tetons, cinder buttes of the Arco desert, and the Snake River Plain.

Cache Peak (10,339 feet), located in the Albion Mountain range, is the tallest Idaho mountain south of the Snake River. Forest Road 548 cuts across the Albion Mountain Division from Oakley to Elba to reach the Independence Lakes Trailhead. A four-mile trail leads non-motorized users to a series of small lakes within view of Cache Peak.




Mt. Harrison

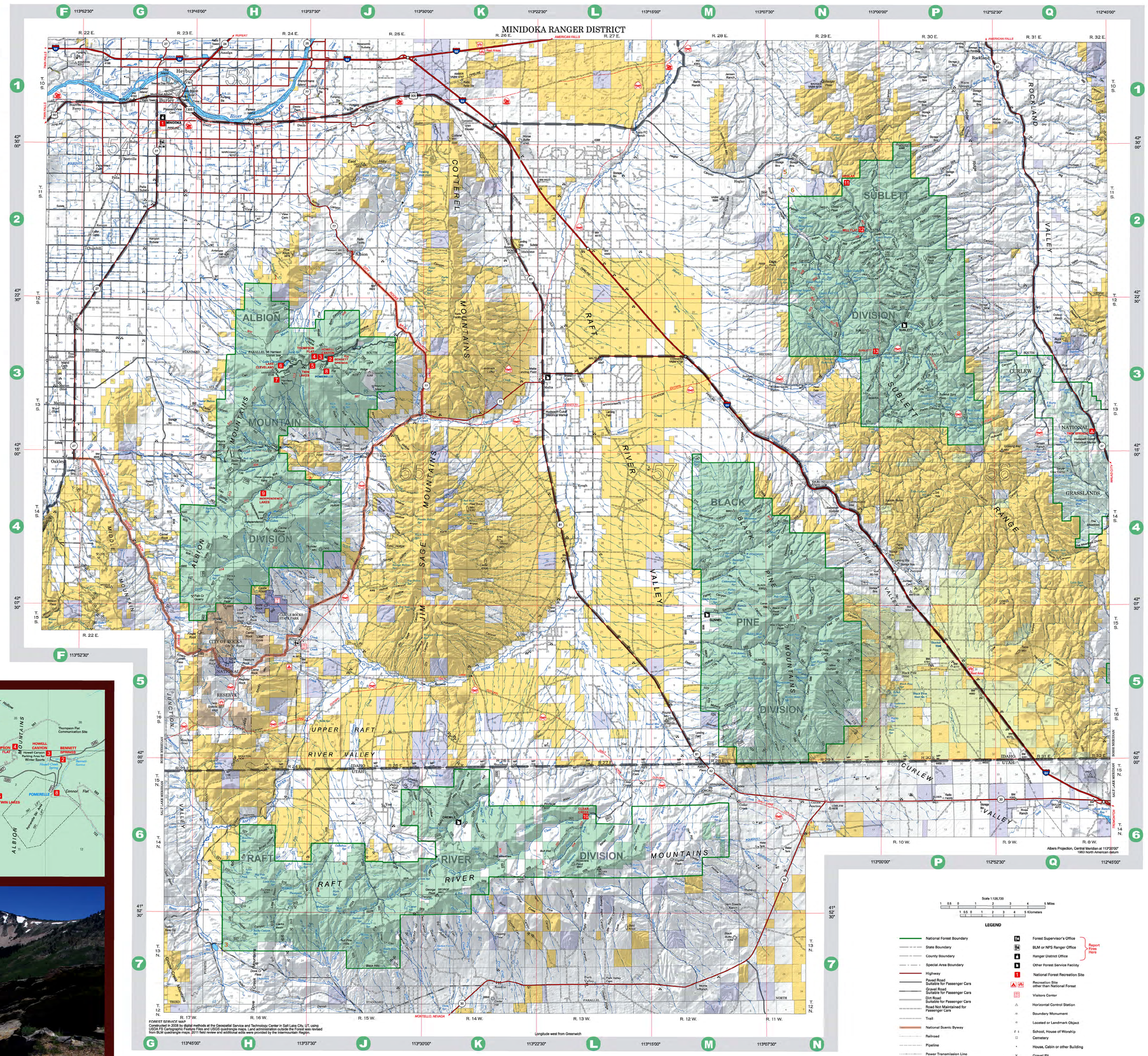
Raft River Division

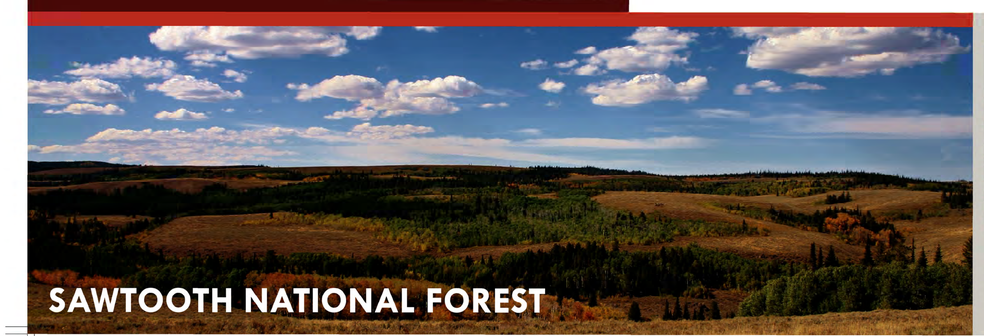
The Raft River Division includes a unique mountain range located in northern Utah, northwest of Salt Lake City. Elevations of these mountain peaks range up to 9,925 feet. On a clear day, the expansive vista from the top offers a view of the Great Salt Lake, Snake River Plain, and into Nevada.

This open meadow country is covered with a variety of vegetative types, including heavy stands of pinyon and juniper with open grass basins. Several drainages provide excellent opportunities for fishing in small streams.

This area is particularly popular among archery and rifle deer hunters. Cattle and sheep grazing is a predominant use of this range.

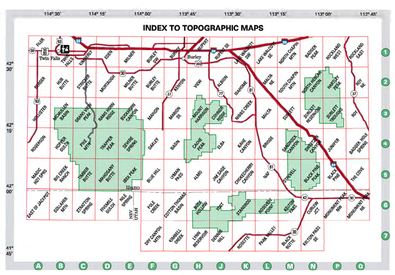
The one developed campground in this Division is Clear Creek Campground. It was renovated in 1990. Dispersed camping opportunities are plentiful which is especially nice during pine nut gathering season.





RECREATION SITE INFORMATION

Site Number	Site Name	Map Location	No. of Units	Group Units	Elevation	General Season of Use	Activities and Facilities	Remarks
1	MINIDOKA	G-1			4150	All Year		District Office
2	BENNETT SPRINGS	J-3	6		7000	Jun 1-Oct 30		
3	HOWELL CANYON	J-3	2		7200	All Year		Warming hut, Winter shelter.
4	THOMPSON FLAT	J-3	20	2	8000	Jun 30-Oct 30		Group reservations.
5	TWIN LAKES	J-3			8000	Jun 30-Oct 30		
6	LAKE CLEVELAND	H-3	15		8000	Jun 30-Oct 30		
7	MT HARRISON	H-3				Jun 30-Oct 30		
8	POMERELLE SKI AREA	J-3			7500	All Year		
9	INDEPENDENCE LAKES	H-4			7000	Jun 1-Oct 30		
10	CLEAR CREEK	L-6	12		5500	Jun 1-Oct 30		
11	HEGLAR	N-2				All Year		
12	MILL FLAT	N-2	6		5500	Jun 1-Oct 30		
13	SUBLETT	N-3	6		5000	Jun 1-Oct 30		

Symbol Key

Ranger District · Information · Campground · Trailhead · Picnic Area · Restroom · Drinking Water · Fee Area · Accessible · Hiking Trail · Horse Trail · Stock Loading · Food Service · Telephone · Fishing · Downhill Skiing · Lookout Tower · Corral · Viewing Area · Snowmobiling · Interpretive Trail