

## **Irish Canyon to Vermillion Creek**

by Dave Cooper



*Colorful scenery in the Vermillion Creek area-small.JPG*

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has designated the area around Irish Canyon as an Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC). The designation results from its unique geology, scenery, plant species and cultural resources.

This is a very special place; remote and scenic. Hike along old roads from the high cliffs of Irish Canyon across grasslands and into the colorful badlands surrounding Vermillion Creek Canyon. The track takes you to a viewpoint at the end of a narrow hogback overlooking Vermillion Creek.

### **Hike Description**

From the campground in Irish Canyon, walk north on Highway 318 until you reach a point when a two track road takes off to the right at mile 1.0. Follow this track as it heads across grassland east-southeast. Stay left at a fork in the road at mile 1.3 and cross a fence at mile 1.6 (take care to re-close the gate after passing through).

At mile 2.1 the road drops quickly to the left into a small wash, then emerges into an enclosed valley and trends right. Take

### **Getting to the Trailhead:**

Drive to the town of Maybell, 30 miles west of Craig on Highway 40. At the west end of Maybell, take Highway 318 and drive 42.5 miles to the junction with County Road 10N. Turn right on 10N and drive 8.4 miles to a small (4 unit) campground in Irish Canyon. The hike is described from the campground.

**Hike Statistics::** 930 feet of total elevation gain in 10.0 miles round trip.

**Difficulty:** Easy hiking on sandy trails and roads.

**USGS Quad:** Irish Canyon, CO.

care to stay on the road here as it has been washed out and may be tricky to follow. Shortly (at mile 2.3) the road leaves the wash and starts to climb up a rib to a small saddle, then drops down into another valley. At mile 2.8 stay straight (right) where another faint road takes off to the left. Several BLM signs along the right margin of this section of the road indicate the boundary of the ACEC.

At mile 3.6 the road turns left, crosses a wash and then starts climbing up towards a ridgeline. A tenth of a mile after crossing the wash (mile 3.7), stay right at a road junction and follow the branch that parallels the ridge a short distance below the ridge crest. In this section see if you can identify Stromatolites, fossilized accretions of algae that look like spheres of rock. At mile 4.5 the road joins the ridge crest and follows a scenic hogback for a half mile to the end of the hike, a brightly colored outcrop that affords good views of the Vermillion Creek valley.

From the BLM website : An Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) is a designation that highlights areas where special management attention is needed to protect and prevent irreparable damage to important historic, cultural and scenic values; fish, wildlife resources or other natural systems or processes; or to protect human life and safety from natural hazards. BLM establishes special management measures for these areas through land use planning. The designation is a record of significant values that must be accommodated when BLM considers future management actions and land use proposals. Congress mandated the designation of ACECs through the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) to manage areas containing truly unique and significant resource values.



*Colorful scenery in the Vermillion Creek area2-small.JPG*



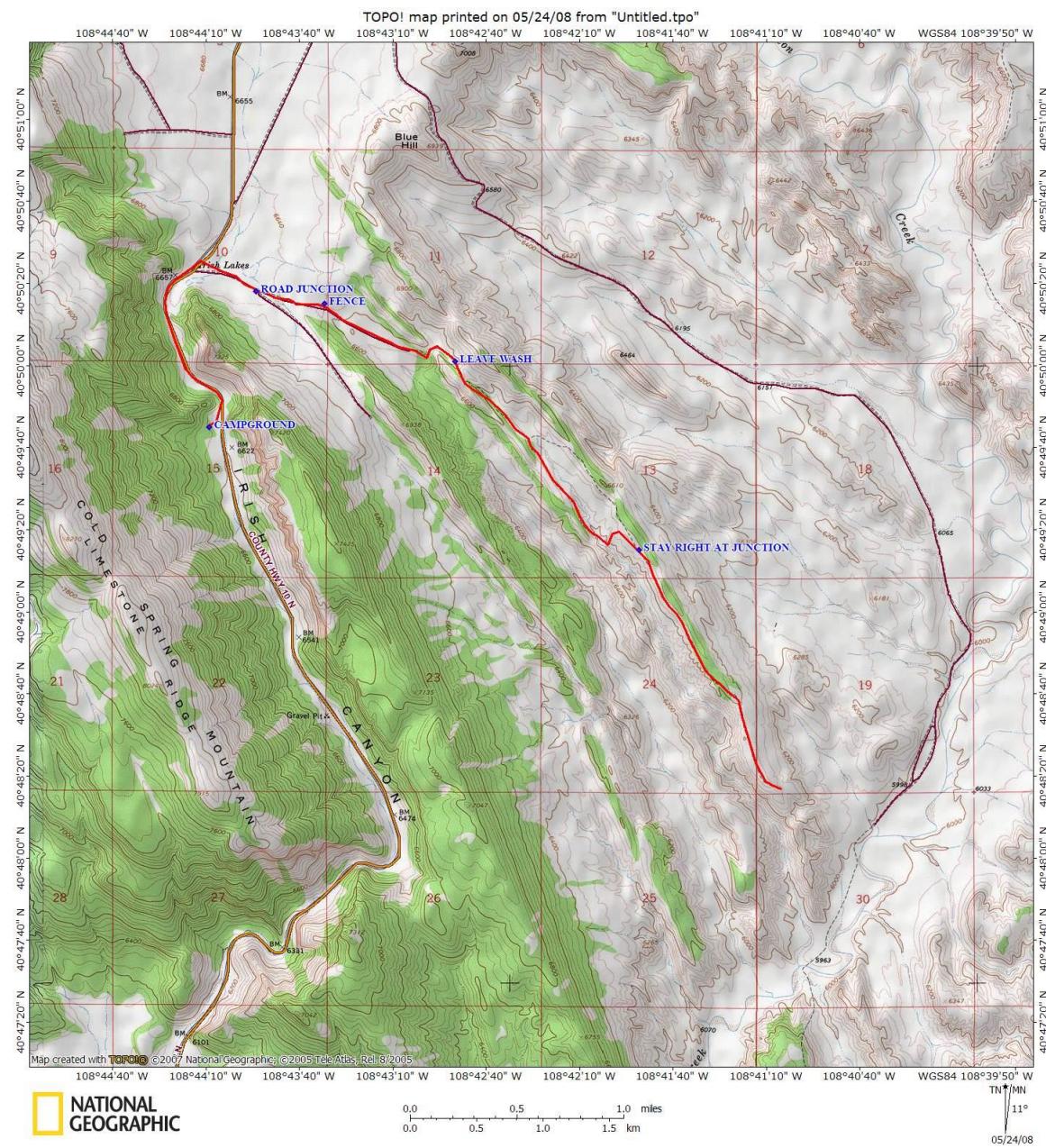
*Hiking along the hogback to the overlook of Vermillion Canyon-small.JPG*



*The steep walls of Irish Canyon-small.JPG*

*Typical desert scenery-  
small.jpg*





GPS Latitude / Longitude NAD83 (Deg., Min., Sec.)  
 CAMPGROUND: 40,49,45N / 108,44,9W, 6617 feet  
 FENCE: 40,50,15N / 108,43,32W, 6640 feet  
 LEAVE WASH: 40,50,1N / 108,42,50W, 6581 feet  
 ROAD JUNCTION: 40,50,18N / 108,43,54W, 6650 feet  
 STAY RIGHT AT JUNCTION: 40,49,15N / 108,41,51W, 6512 feet



