



Dispersed Camping Practices

Overland Expo 2024

Dispersed Camping Practices: Is This Ok?

Balancing impact while having an awesome time!

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Ellen Wayte - TreadLightly! Oregon Program Manager

About Adam Zolyak

- 10+ years overlanding
- Camped at 100s of dispersed campsites
- Maker: software, 3D printing, teaching, photography, videography
- Home base near Denver, CO but often somewhere in the west



About Ellen Wayte

- Tread Lightly!'s Oregon Program Manager
- 10+ years working in the outdoors as an overlanding tour leader, scuba and freediving instructor, naturalist, and park ranger
- Grew up in Alaska and Oregon
- Enjoys wildlife, overlanding, hiking, and riding motorcycles



Agenda

What are we learning today?

- What topics and questions are most important to you?
- The biggest opportunities w/ practices, tips, & q+a
 1. Driving + At Camp
 2. Grey Water
 3. Human Waste / Trash
 4. Campfires
 5. Neighbors
- Additional resources and getting involved

Dispersed Camping Practices Resource Guide

These slides + our recommended resources



<https://journey-labs.ck.page/expodispersed>

Dispersed Vehicle Camping

Why dispersed camping?

- Beautiful places
- Less annoying sounds
- Less crowded
- Free or low cost
- Exploration & discovery along the way



What is dispersed vehicle camping?

Definition

“A form of camping where travelers set up their campsites outside of developed campgrounds / facilities, generally on public land, and are entirely self sufficient.”

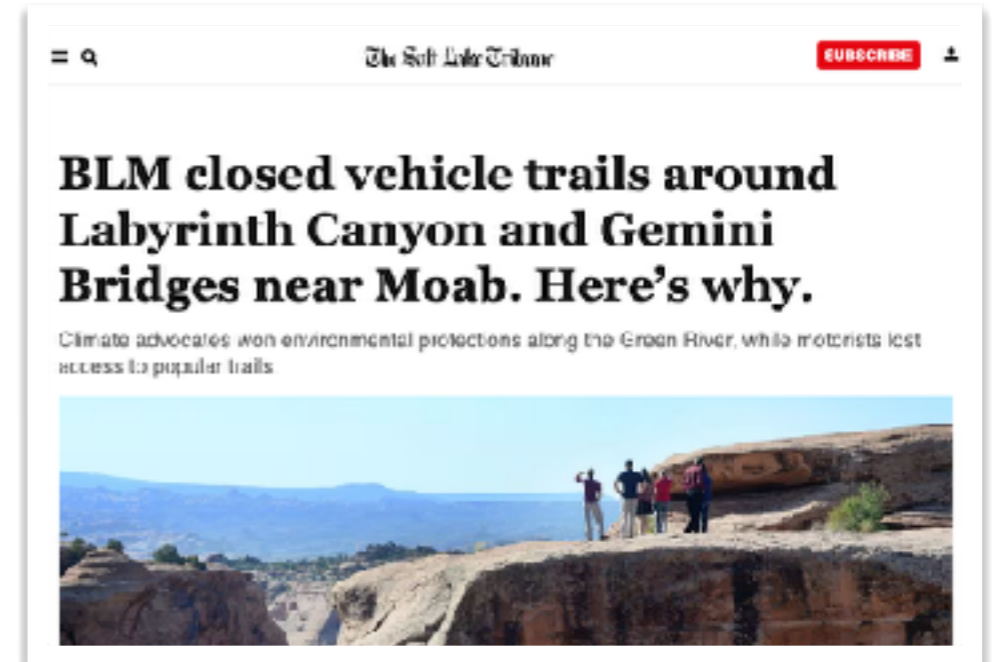
Also known as “boondocking”, “wild camping”, or “free camping”.



Dispersed Camping

Why care about practices?

- **Preserve access** to land, trails, and camping
- **Leave it in good condition** for the next person, wildlife, and the ecosystem
- Selfishly so that **I can enjoy it again and again** for years to come
- It's **enjoyable to learn and develop skills** (and occasionally you need new gear too)



DESIGNATED DISPERSED CAMPING

Designated Dispersed Camping only allowed at sites marked with signage along the following roads:

700, 700.A, 700.C, 700.CB, 700.D, 700.F, 700.F-2, 700.FA, 700.G, 700.H, 700.HA, 700.HB, 700.K, 700.KA, 700.L, 700.M, 700.N, 700.NA, 700.NB, 700.NC, 700.O, 700.OA, 700.P, 700.PA, 700.R, 700.RA, 700.RA-2, 700.RA-3, 700.RB, 700.RB-1, 700.RC, 700.RD, 700.S, 700.T, 700.U, 700.Z

Resources + Organizations

Where does this info come from?



TreadLightly!

What is TreadLightly! ?



Tread Lightly! is a non-profit organization that leads a national initiative to **promote the responsible use of motorized vehicles when recreating outdoors.**

Our goal is to **balance** the off-road and off-highway vehicle (OHV) users' need for adventure with the need to conserve the places where they ride and explore.

TREAD Principles

The principles behind the practices



T ravel Responsibly

R espect the Rights of Others

E ducate Yourself

A void Sensitive Areas

D o Your Part

Identify A Few Opportunities

What are 2 or 3 things you can try?

“Nobody is perfect, and perfection is not the goal. Its about doing the best we can, as often as possible.”

~~Comprehensive~~

Practical

#1 Driving + At Camp

Biggest Opportunities

Prepare + Educate Yourself

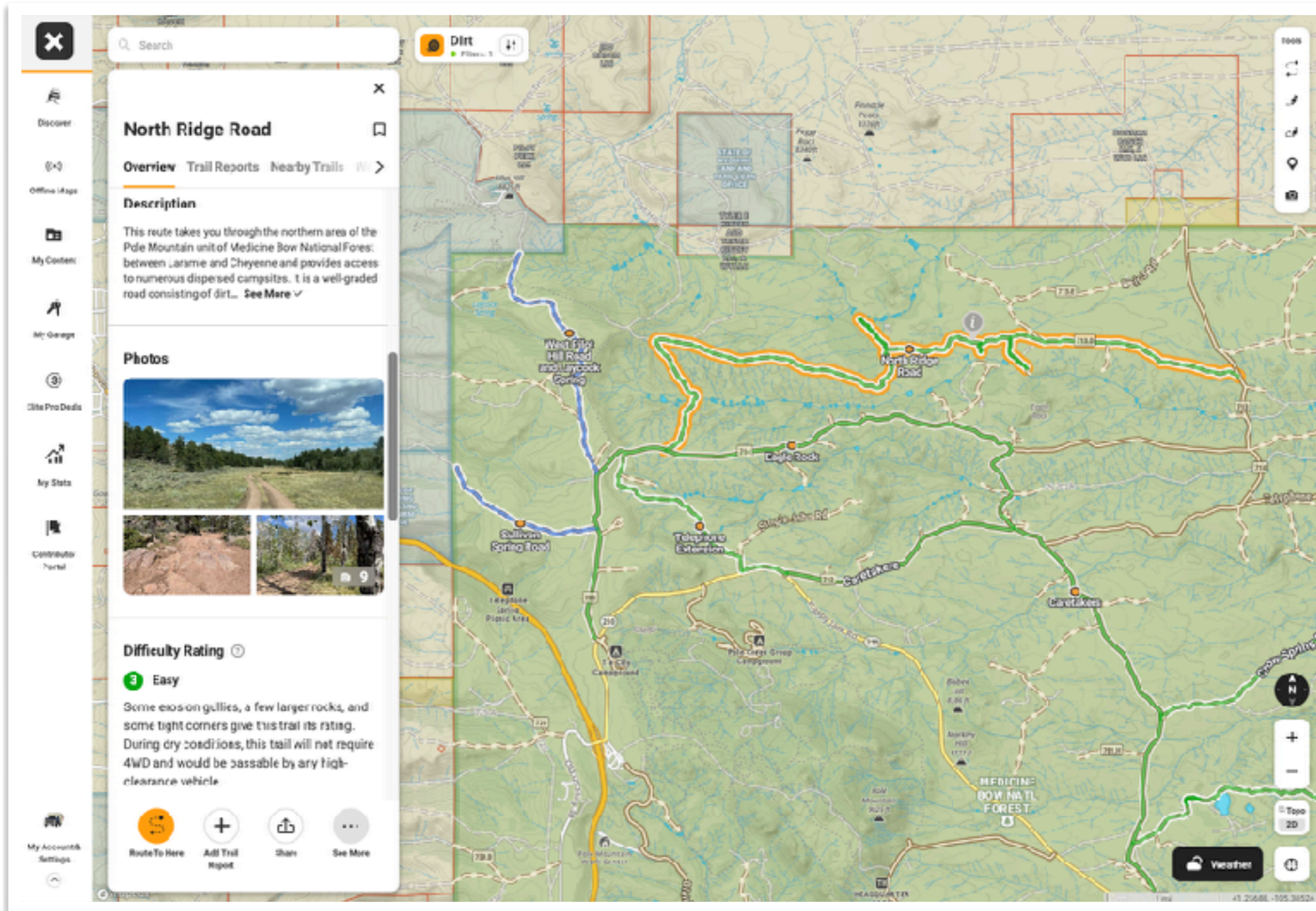
Driving + At Camp

Before your trip:

- **Research** land ownership, trails, and campsites. Know where you are allowed to drive, width / vehicle type restrictions, closure dates, fire bans
- Know about **other likely users** (OHV, horses, livestock, etc) and be ok with it
- Have **appropriate supplies and gear** (recovery / first aid + **know how to use them**)
- Check the **weather** (will it be too muddy?)

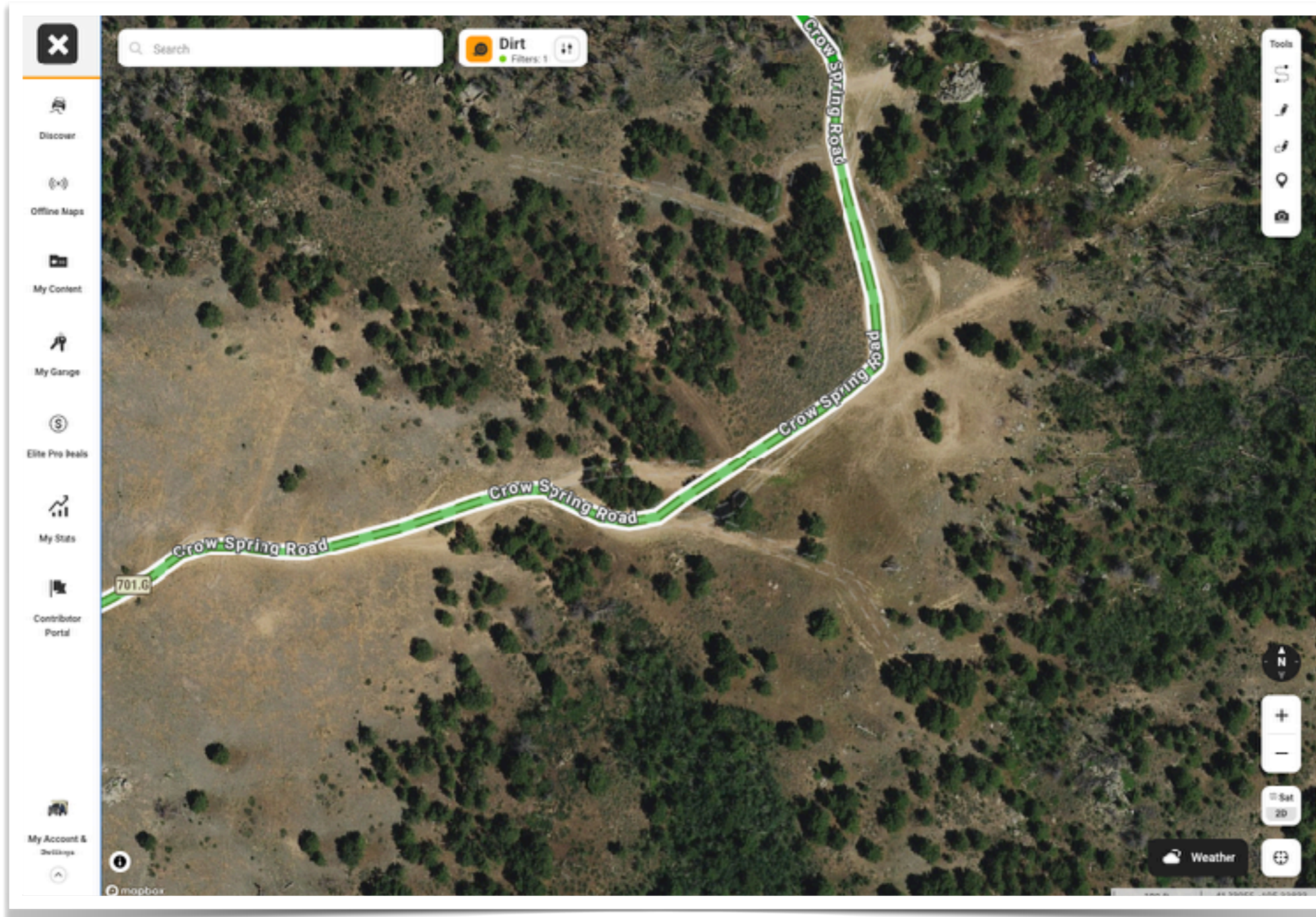
Prepare: Research Trails

Driving + At Camp



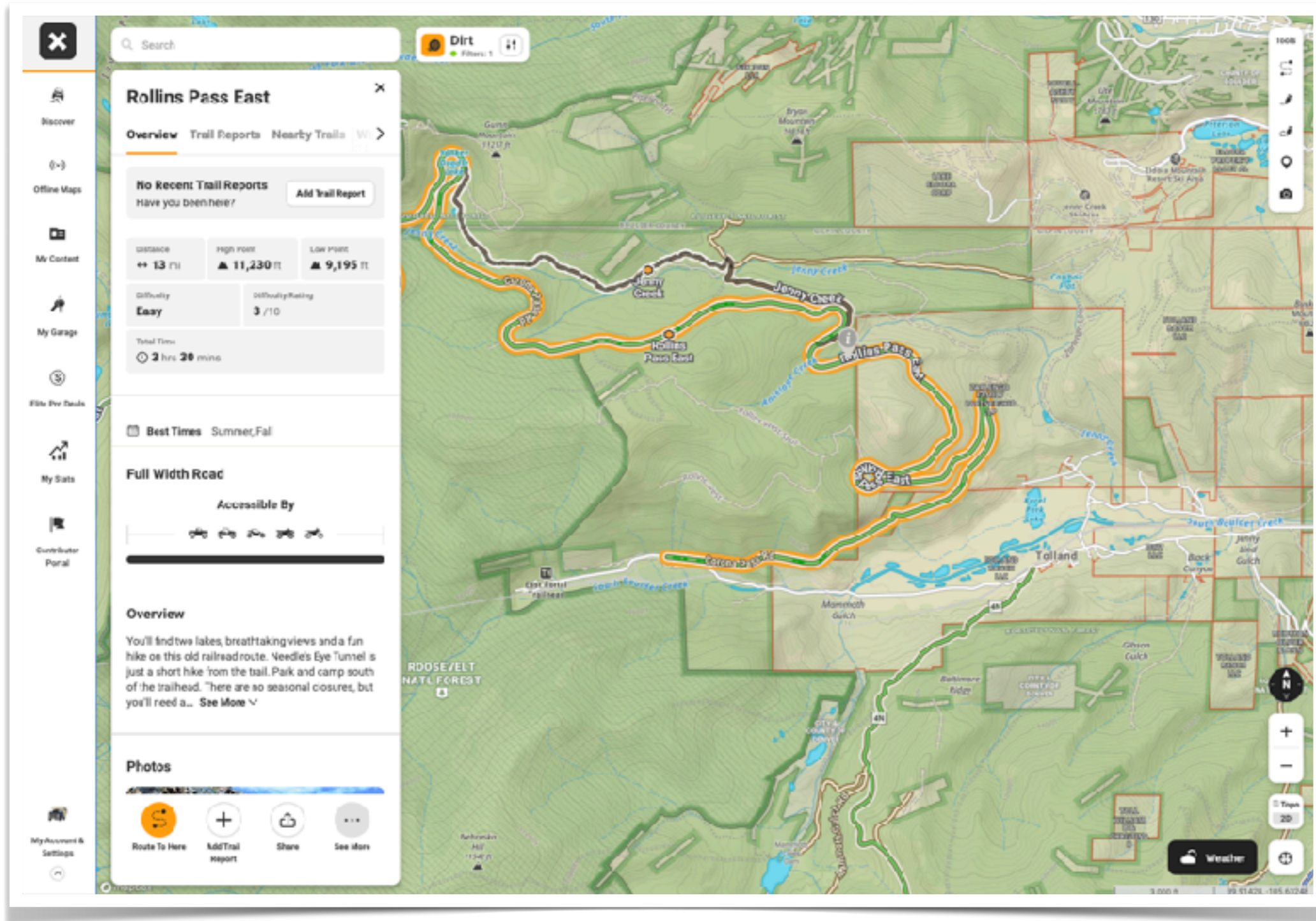
Prepare: Research Camping

Driving + At Camp



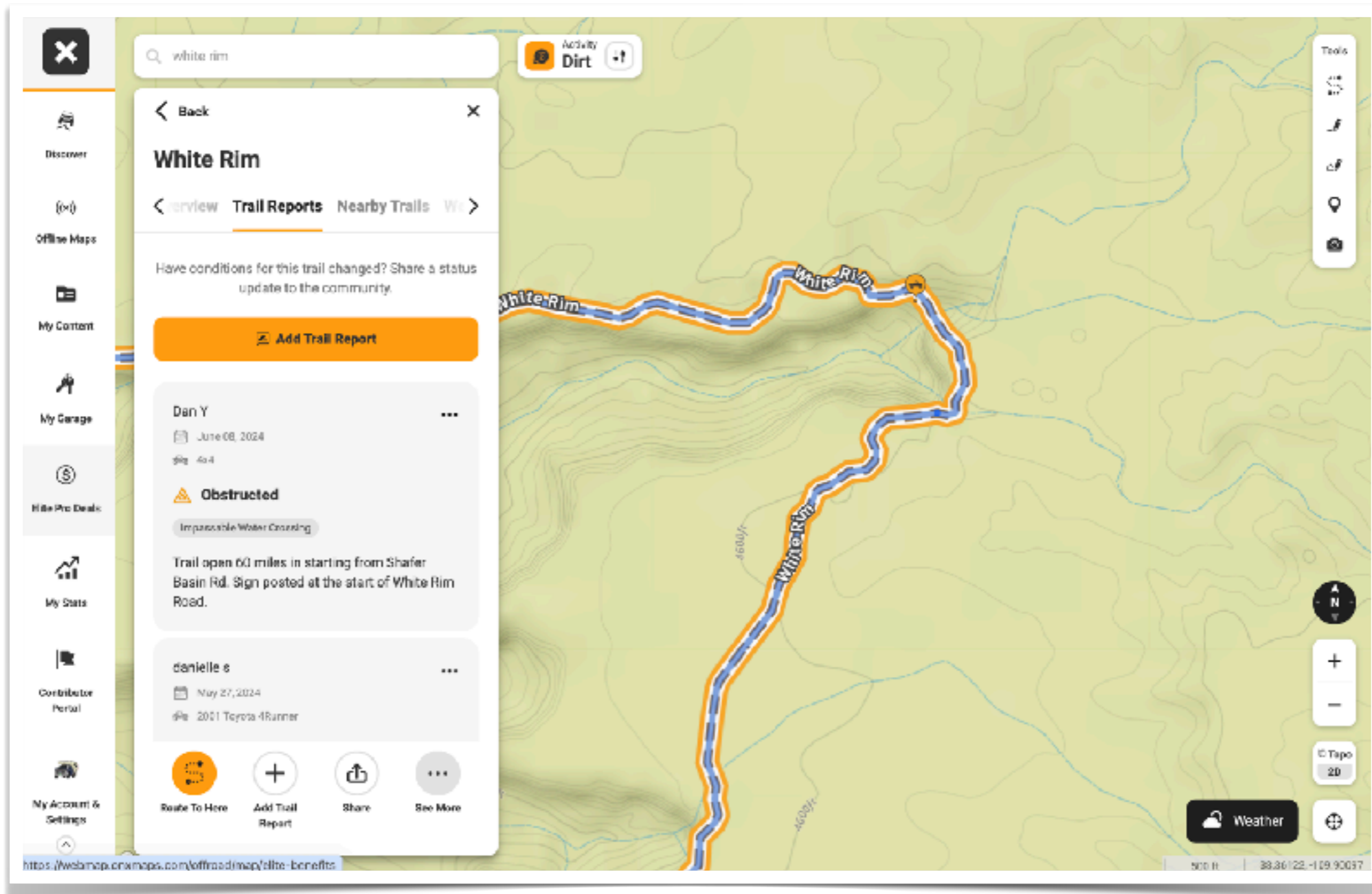
Prepare: Research Private Land

Driving + At Camp



Prepare: Research Conditions

Driving + At Camp



Prepare: Travel Together

Driving + At Camp



Stay The Trail

Stay on the trail: over rocks

Driving



Stay on the trail: over rocks

Driving



Stay on the trail: through water

Driving



Stay on the trail: through water

Driving



Stay on the trail: mud / ruts

Driving



Stay on the trail: mud / ruts

Driving



Stay on the trail

	<h3>Get Dirty</h3> <p>Go straight through mud puddles while maintaining a steady speed. Don't get stuck.</p>		<h3>No Shortcuts</h3> <p>Switchbacks are designed to maintain the stability of a trail, cutting them destroys their integrity.</p>
	<h3>Rock N Roll</h3> <p>Rocks are natural obstacles and part of the off-road experience. Go over them, not around.</p>		<h3>Stay In Line</h3> <p>Riding single file on tight, narrow trails will avoid braiding and trail widening.</p>
	<h3>Get Over It</h3> <p>The challenge is going over the tree. If the tree is too big, go back and contact the land manager.</p>		<h3>Stay On Course</h3> <p>Stream crossings should be made by crossing them directly at 90 degrees and staying on the trail.</p>
	<h3>Whoop It Up</h3> <p>Go over the whoops (bumps on trails created by constant use). If you want a smooth ride, stay on the highway.</p>		<h3>Be Sensitive</h3> <p>Wetlands are important and sensitive areas for wildlife and people. Please avoid them.</p>

<https://staythetrail.org/>

BANTHA OVERLAND

 @banthaoverland  banthaoverland.com

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Avoid Muddy Trails When Possible

Driving



Repair Trail Damage

Driving



Leave Gates As Found

Driving



Minimize Wheel Spin

Driving

- Air down tires
- Use 4x4
- Use lockers
- Use drive modes (ex mud)
- Use traction boards
- Use winch, snatch strap, and recovery gear



Campsites

Choosing A Dispersed Campsite

At Camp

- **Prefer existing campsites** when available since they're already disturbed
- Prefer camping on **durable surfaces** (bare ground, dirt, gravel, sand, rock, 6"+ snow, leaf litter, pine needles, and dry grasses)
- **Camp 200 feet from water** (ex river, lake, marsh) and brittle banks
- **Camp within 100-300 feet of designated trails**
- Check **local regulations** and **read signs** (websites, ranger stations, etc)

Choosing A Dispersed Campsite

At Camp



Choosing A Dispersed Campsite

At Camp

- Check for hazards like **dead trees, dry washes, wasp nests, ant hills, etc**
- Orient your vehicle and camp so that there's a **clear exit if there's an emergency**
- **Share your itinerary** with at least 2 people (especially if remote) and **check in from camp** using a phone or inReach, or similar device

Prefer Established / Impacted Sites

At Camp



Prefer Established / Impacted Sites

At Camp



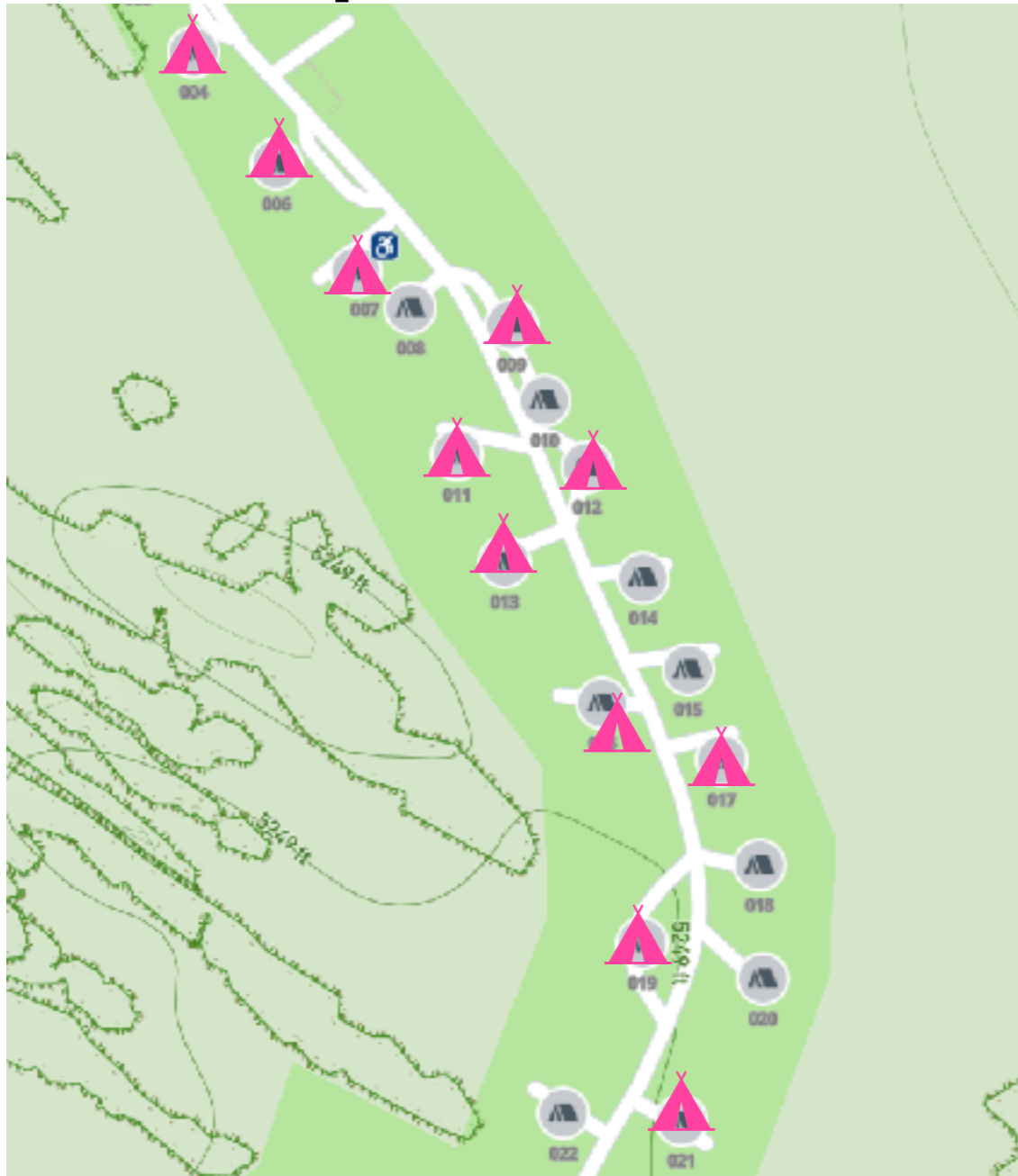
Prefer Established / Impacted Sites

At Camp

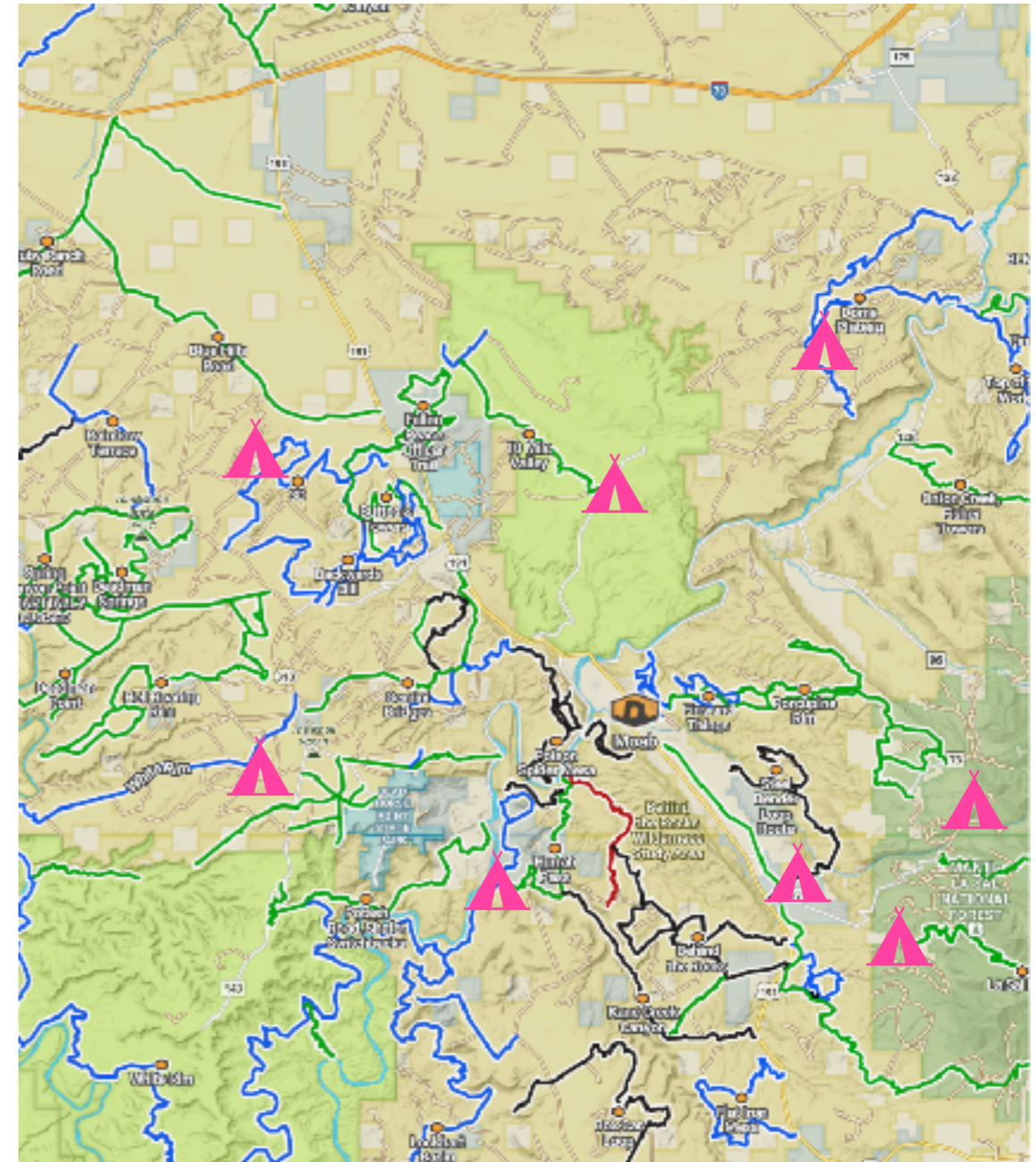


Visit Less Used / Known Areas

At Camp



VS



#2 Grey Water

Biggest Opportunities

Grey Water

What is grey water?

“Water from washing ourselves, our dishes, our clothes, and brushing our teeth”

Ick!

Grey Water

- Leaves **unpleasant smells and solids** for the next camper
- **Impacts the ecosystem** (ex decreasing water clarity in a lake or causing an algae bloom)
- **Attracts animals** which become a nuisance and further disturb the site (eg digging)

Disposal

Grey Water

- **Capture:** in a wash basin, sink, or other container
- **Strain:** strain w/ mesh strainer to remove food particles
- **Pack Out or Disperse:** pack it out if possible; otherwise disperse over a wide area that's 200 feet from the campsite and water sources
 - If packing out, dump at campgrounds, RV parks, or toilet (if necessary); iOverlander is a good resource



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AzjukdquCQQ>

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Using Less Water - Dishes

Grey Water

- **Wipe dishes** with bread / tortilla (yummy snack) or paper towels
- **3 Basin Dish Washing:** wash, hot rinse, cold rinse (bleach optional)



<https://www.campfireguy.com/wash-dishes-campout/>

Using Less Water - Hygiene

Grey Water

- **Low flow aerator / shower head / sink head**



- **Geyser shower**



- **Use wipes vs showering**



Biodegradable Products

Grey Water

Use biodegradable soaps like Dr. Bronners, Mrs Meyer's



#3 Pee, Poop, & Trash

Biggest Opportunities

Pee

Pee

Waste

- Less impactful than poop
- Undesirable impacts: smelly, attract animals - it's a salt lick for animals
- **Pee on durable surfaces** (rocks, pine needles) away from your campsite and 200ft from water sources

Pee Bottles, Funnels, and Rags

Helpful while traveling or at night.
Dispose of later.



Poop

Poop

Waste

- Can contain pathogens and cause disease
- Undesirable impacts: pollution, smelly, no one wants to see it
- **Pack it out if possible** (you have a vehicle after all) - poop and toilet paper
- **Pack out pet waste too**
- Use WAG Bags for emergencies and while away from camp and vehicle

Join the A.S.S. movement!

Waste

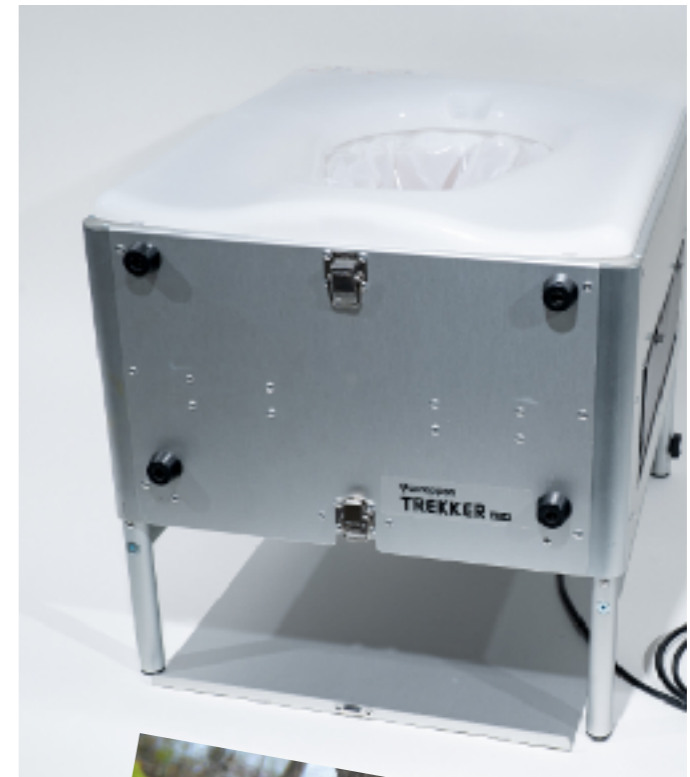


<https://thefirewild.com/collections/frontpage/products/order-of-10-5x5-a-s-s-stickers>

Toilets

Waste

Go check out the vendors at Overland Expo! Lots of great options for packing out sold waste.



Trash

Trash Decomposition

Waste

How long does it take for a citrus peel to decompose?



Camping and Bears / Animals

Waste

- Maintain a **clean camp** - disposed of trash, store food, etc
- food, trash, and smelly items **stored away from camp**
- Store in a “bear proof container”
- Have a plan for how to handle animal encounters - bear spray, noise, etc



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tgwejaTNZml>

Trash

Waste

- Bag trash / recycling in **smaller quantities** (2-3 gallons) for easier disposal
- Dispose of at visitor's centers, campgrounds, trail heads, ranger stations, gas stations; **prefer less remote locations** with less frequent pickups
- Bundle trash disposal + grey water disposal + water fills (iOverlander is a good resource)



<https://www.nationalparks.org/explore/programs/reducing-waste-sent-to-landfills>

Leave It Better Than You Found It

Waste

Don't wait for a trail cleanup event

- **Cleanup** along the trail and at camp
- **Repair damage** along the trail or camp if needed

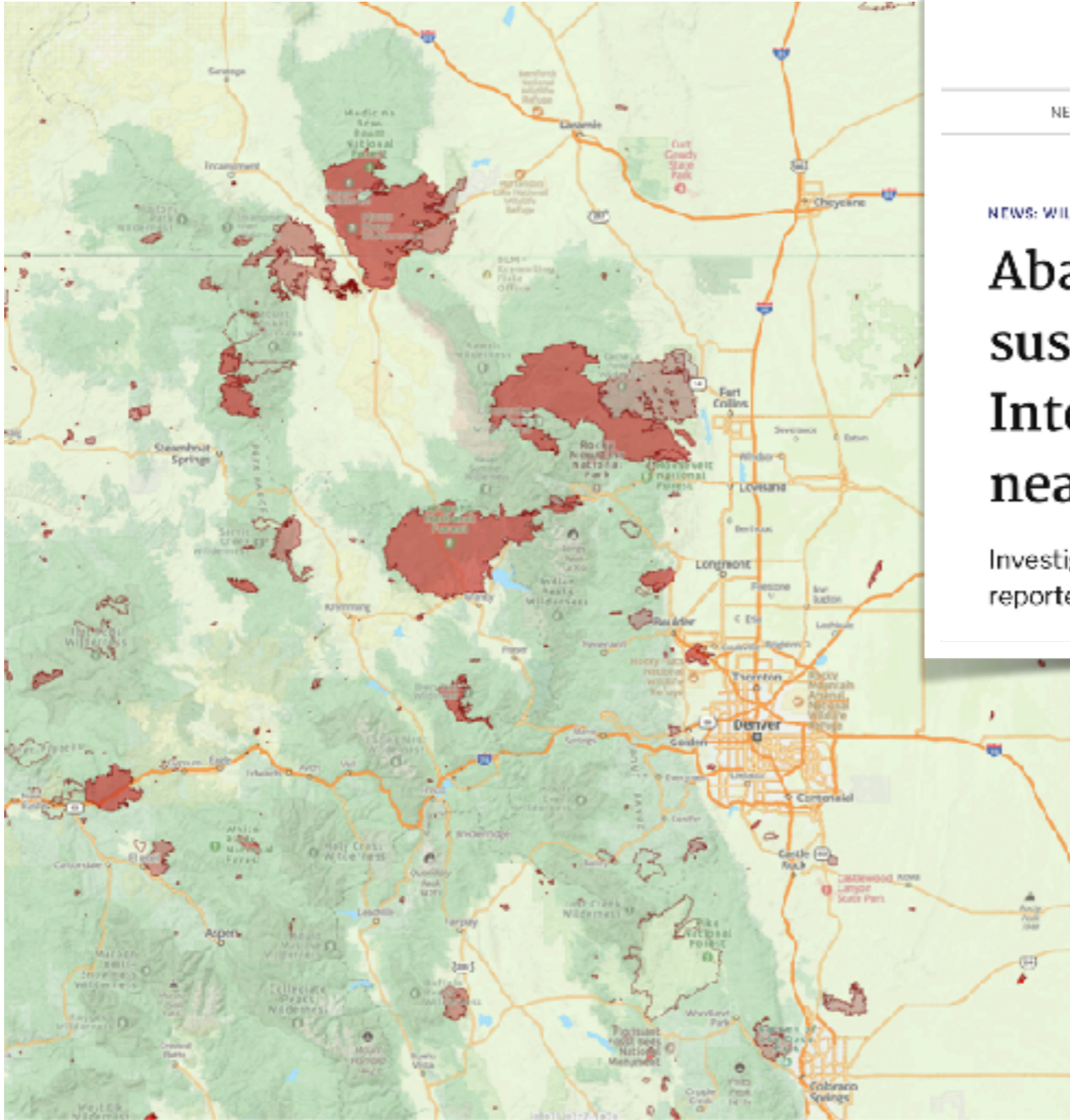


#4 Campfires

Biggest Opportunities

Let's Not Burn Down Our Favorite Places

Campfires



THE COLORADO SUN

NEWS NEWSLETTERS EVENTS PODCAST APP ABOUT US **DONATE**

NEWS: WILDFIRE

Abandoned campfire suspected cause of 450-acre Interlaken wildfire burning near Leadville

Investigator believes the campfire was left days before being reported Tuesday when the fire started south of Twin Lakes



Making “Campfire Soup”

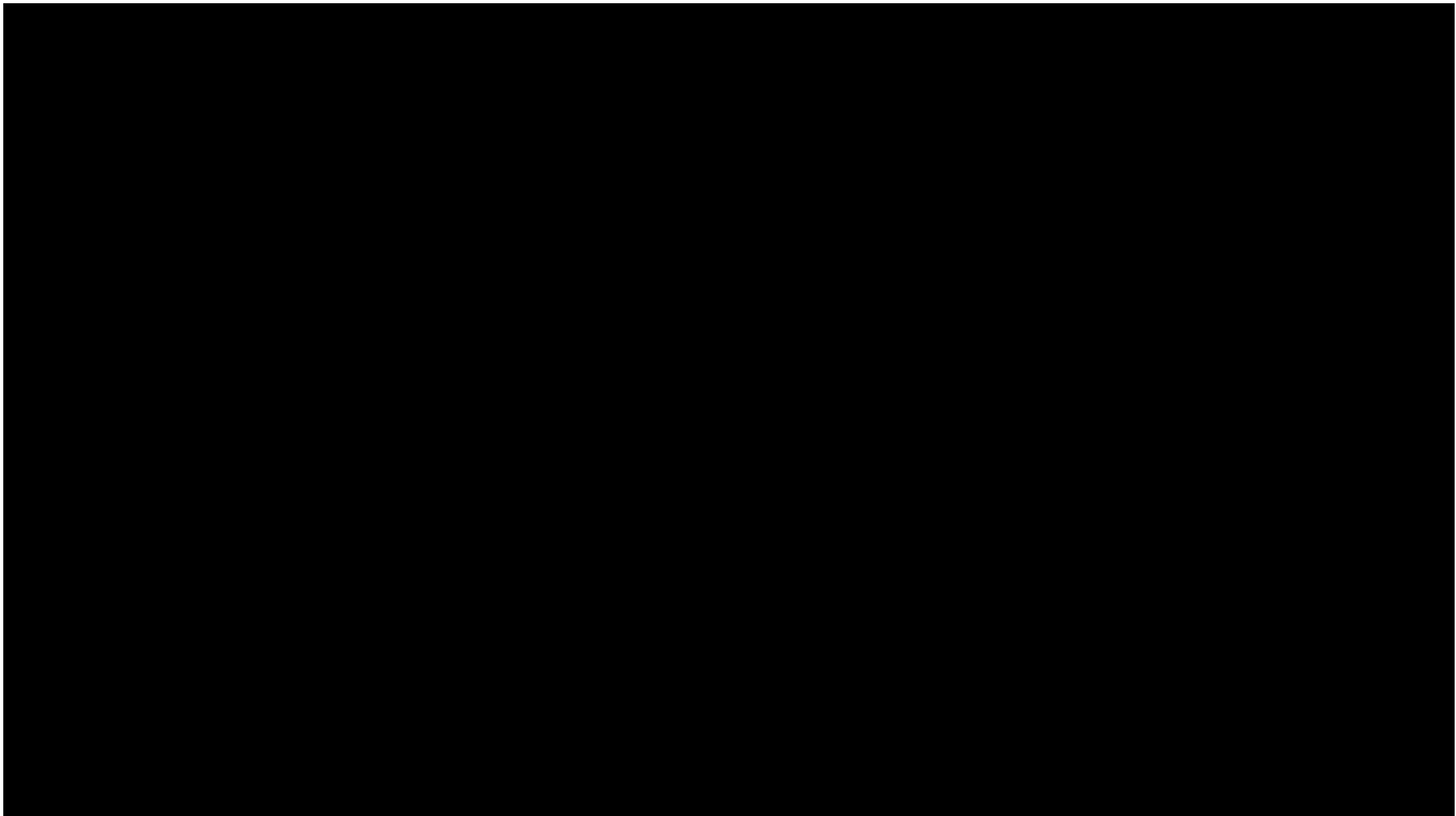
Waste

1. Burn wood down to 2” or smaller pieces
2. Drown with water
3. Stir
4. Check for heat with hand
5. Repeat as needed
6. Check before leaving camp



Making “Campfire Soup”

Waste



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mJGau9OdU4k>

Propane Firepits

Campfires

- **Reduces forest fire risk**
- Great option when there's a fire ban
- Propane releases less harmful pollutants vs wood



Collecting Firewood

Campfires

- Obtain firewood **cut within~50 miles** or collect firewood if allowed to reduce bug spread; kiln dried isn't necessarily bug free
- The 4Ds of firewood collection
 - **Dead:** dead, not live, wood
 - **Down:** wood that's already on the ground (not standing dead)
 - **Dinky:** smaller pieces of wood about the side of your wrist
 - **Distant:** collect over a larger area and further from camp

#5 Neighbors

Biggest Opportunities

Be A Good Neighbor

Neighbors



- **Support the local community** - patronize small businesses, farmers markets, guides, outfitters, restaurants, etc
- Respect the rights of others
 - **Private land owners**
 - **Allowed uses** (hunting, ATVs, target shooting, livestock, etc)
 - Leave **space for animals**, especially around water sources (behavior change means you're too close)

Be A Good Neighbor

Neighbors



- **Leave some space** between you and your neighbors
- **Minimize light and sound**, especially at night
- **Use batteries and solar** (not generators)
- **Smile and say hi!** Maybe you'll find a new friend

#6 Social Media Sharing

Super Bonus Opportunity!

Reducing Over Use

Social Media Sharing

Automated **social media algorithms can share your posts to thousands of people**, which can cause over use of popular places.

- **Share less precise coordinates** for example “The San Rafael Swell” or “Utah” vs “39.83705585, -104.861610652”
- **Continue contributing coordinates and condition reports** in large datasets that help people spread out and share trail reports OnX, Gaia, Trails Off Road, All Trails, etc
- **Promote lesser known locations** that are also awesome but have less usage to help people spread out

Takeaways

What are 2 or 3 things you will try?

“Nobody is perfect, and perfection is not the goal. Its about doing the best we can, as often as possible.”

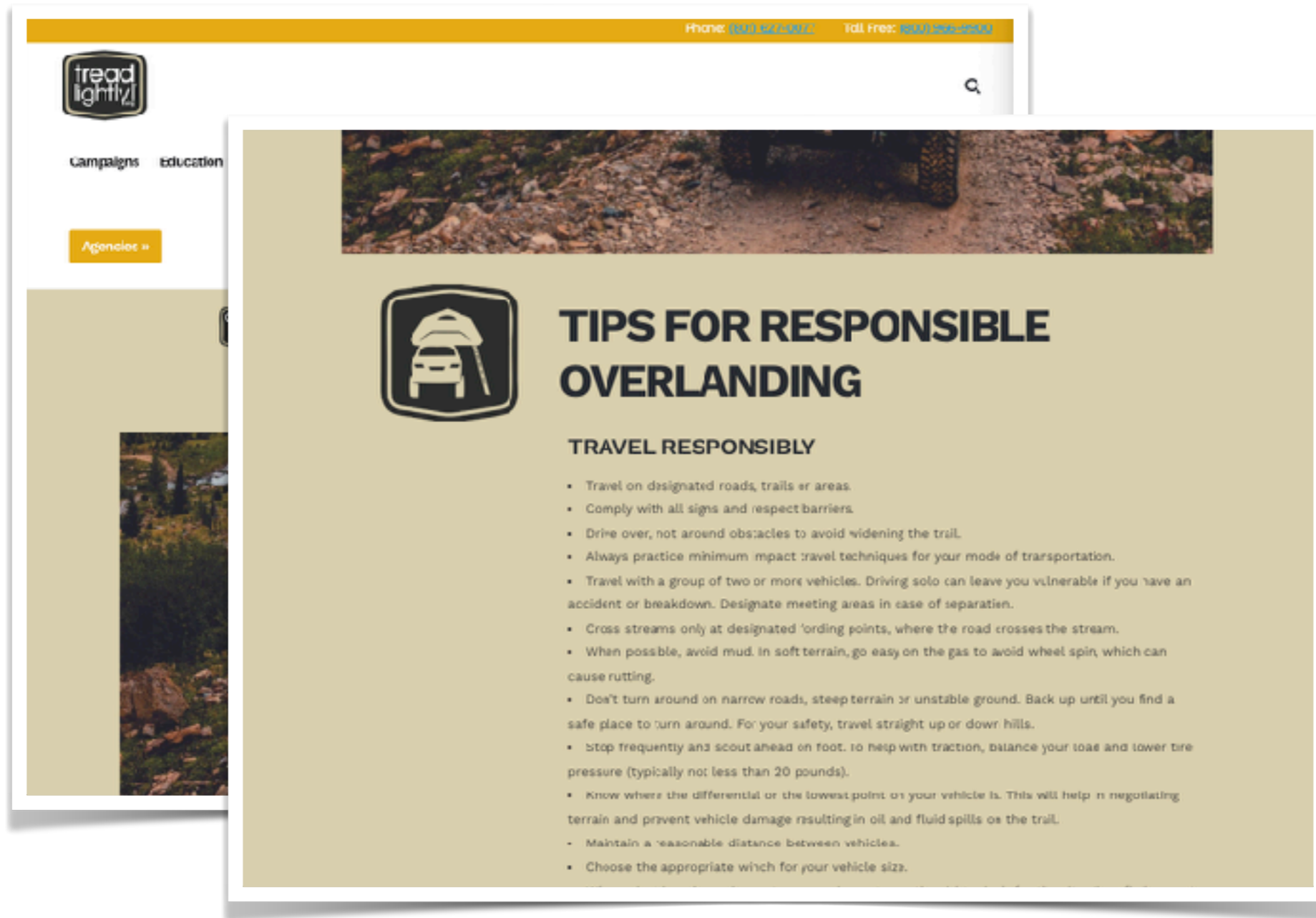
Go Talk With Vendors

They are helping with many of these practices!



TreadLightly! Tips

Tips For Responsible Overlanding




The image shows a screenshot of the TreadLightly! website. At the top, there is a yellow navigation bar with the phone number (800) 822-4472 and toll-free number (800) 254-2542. The TreadLightly! logo is in the top left, and there are links for 'Campaigns' and 'Education'. A 'Agencies' button is also visible. The main content area features a large image of a rocky trail. Below the image is a shield-shaped icon of a car on a trail. The title 'TIPS FOR RESPONSIBLE OVERLANDING' is prominently displayed. Underneath, the section 'TRAVEL RESPONSIBLY' is followed by a list of 14 tips for responsible overlanding.

Phone: (800) 822-4472 Toll Free: (800) 254-2542

treadlightly!

Campaigns Education

Agencies »



TIPS FOR RESPONSIBLE OVERLANDING

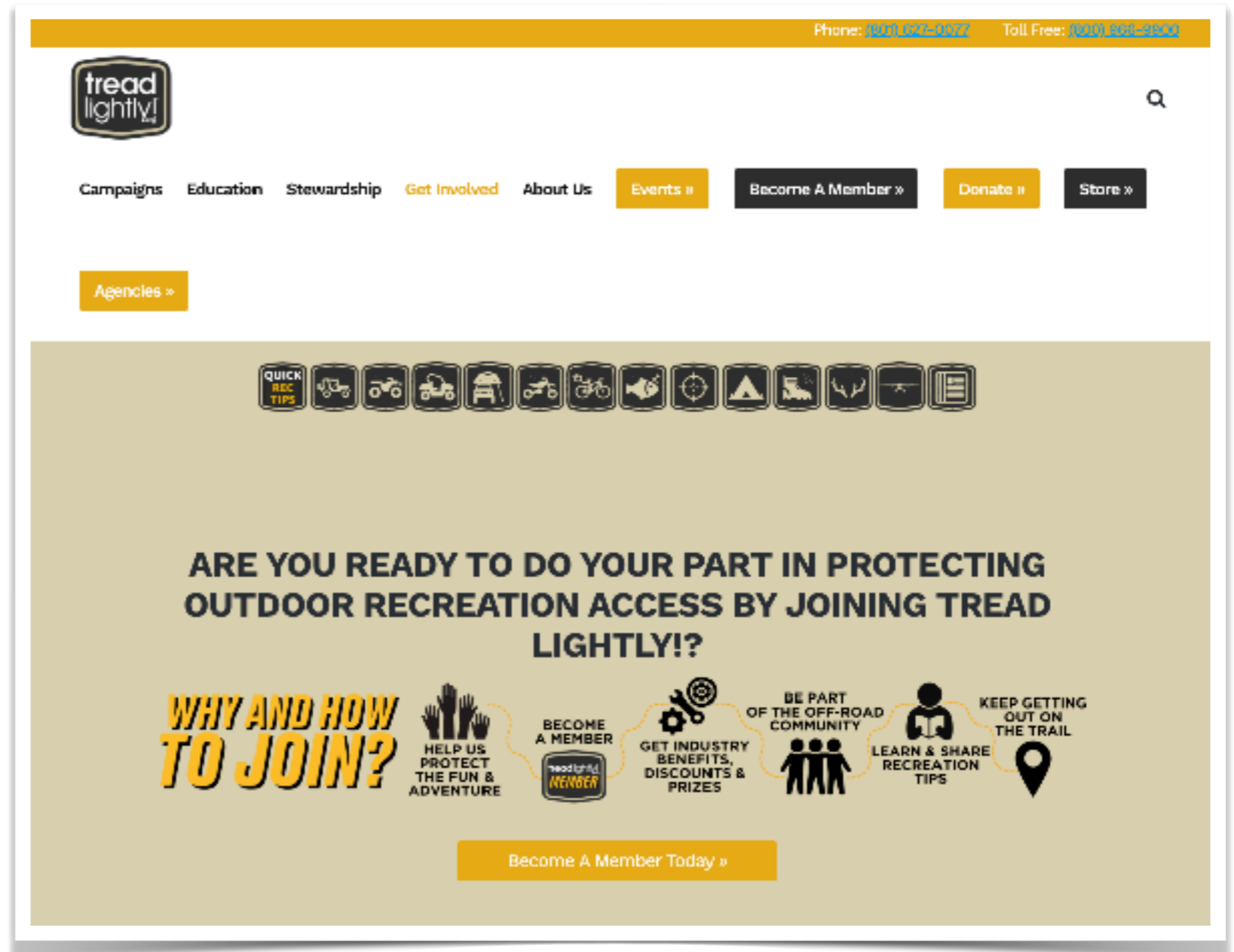
TRAVEL RESPONSIBLY

- Travel on designated roads, trails or areas.
- Comply with all signs and respect barriers.
- Drive over, not around obstacles to avoid widening the trail.
- Always practice minimum impact travel techniques for your mode of transportation.
- Travel with a group of two or more vehicles. Driving solo can leave you vulnerable if you have an accident or breakdown. Designate meeting areas in case of separation.
- Cross streams only at designated fording points, where the road crosses the stream.
- When possible, avoid mud. In soft terrain, go easy on the gas to avoid wheel spin, which can cause rutting.
- Don't turn around on narrow roads, steep terrain or unstable ground. Back up until you find a safe place to turn around. For your safety, travel straight up or down hills.
- Stop frequently and scout ahead on foot, to help with traction, balance your load and lower tire pressure (typically no less than 20 pounds).
- Know where the differential or the lowest point on your vehicle is. This will help in negotiating terrain and prevent vehicle damage resulting in oil and fluid spills on the trail.
- Maintain a reasonable distance between vehicles.
- Choose the appropriate winch for your vehicle size.

<https://treadlightly.org/learn/recreation-tips/overlanding/>

TreadLightly! Next Steps

- Become A Member
- Newsletter Sign Up
- Events
- Visit Our Booth





Dispersed Camping Resource Guide

A free guide with my recommendations

<https://journey-labs.ck.page/expodispersed>



Follow along for dispersed camping areas, tips, and gear



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@banthaoverland

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