



# Dispersed Camping Practices

Overland Expo 2024

# Dispersed Camping Practices: Is This Ok?

*Minimizing impact while having an awesome time!*

# 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 Val Zolyak

- 10+ years overlanding
- Camped at 100s of dispersed campsites
- Product Manager for onX Offroad
- Home base near Denver, CO but often somewhere in the west



# Slides + Follow Our Journey

Slides + Links to Resources

[go.banthaoverland.com/expoeast24](https://go.banthaoverland.com/expoeast24)

Follow along for route planning and dispersed camping tips, DIY overland gear, and our travels mixing work and play

[banthaoverland.com](https://banthaoverland.com)



@banthaoverland



@banthaoverland

Rate this and other sessions in the Overland Expo app

**What is dispersed  
vehicle camping?**



**Dispersed Camping**

# 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”.



# Why dispersed camping?

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



# Agenda

**What are we learning today?**

## **The 5 biggest opportunities**

1. Surfaces (Trails, Campsites)
2. Trash & Waste
3. Campfires
4. Neighbors
5. ???

~~Comprehensive~~

**Practical**

# Resources + Organizations

Where does this info come from?



# 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.”*

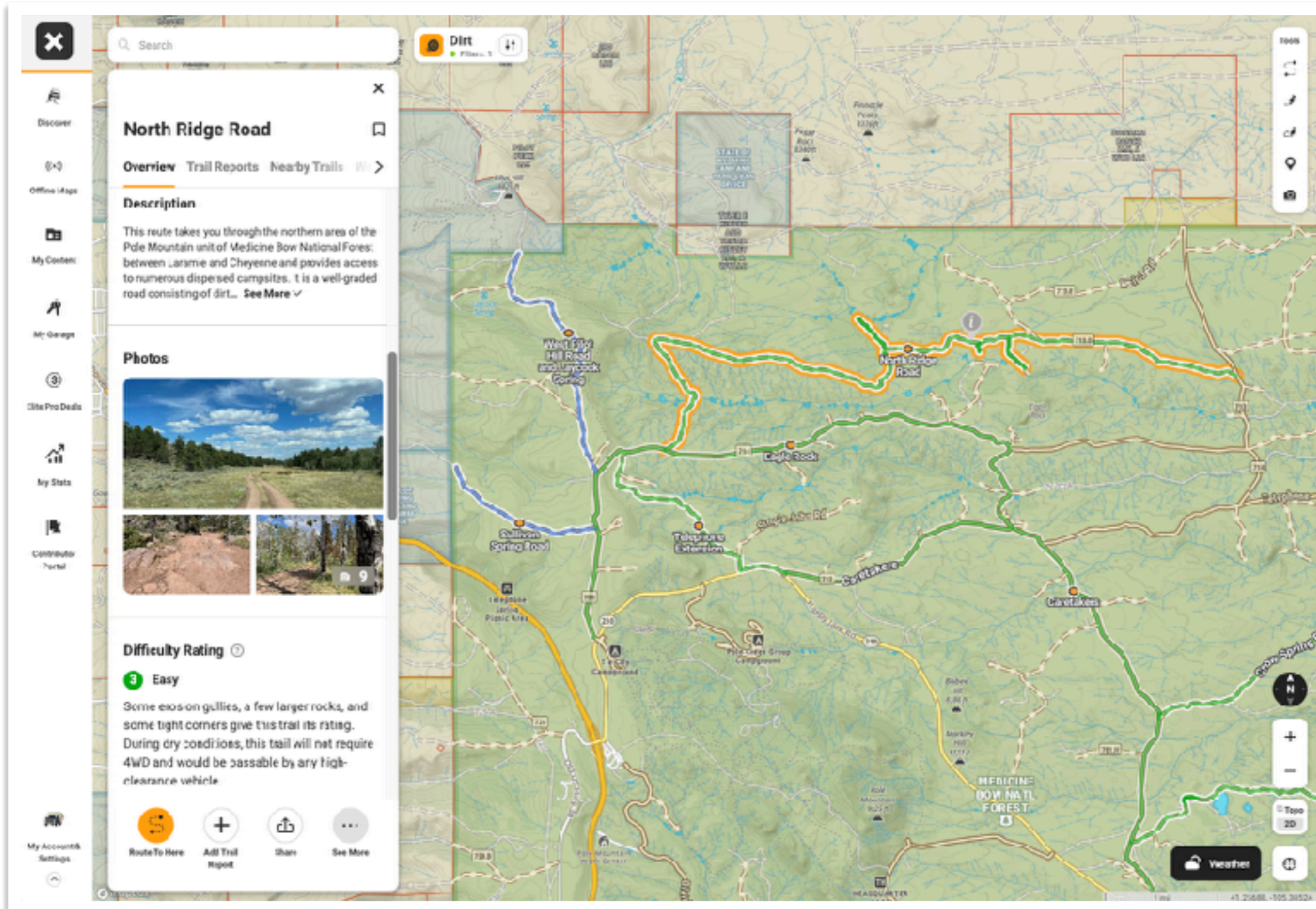
# **#1 Surface Impacts**

**Biggest Opportunities**

**Driving**

# Drive On Existing Offroad Trails

## Driving





# Stay On The Trail

## Driving



# Stay on the trail: over rocks

## Driving



# Stay on the trail: through water

## Driving



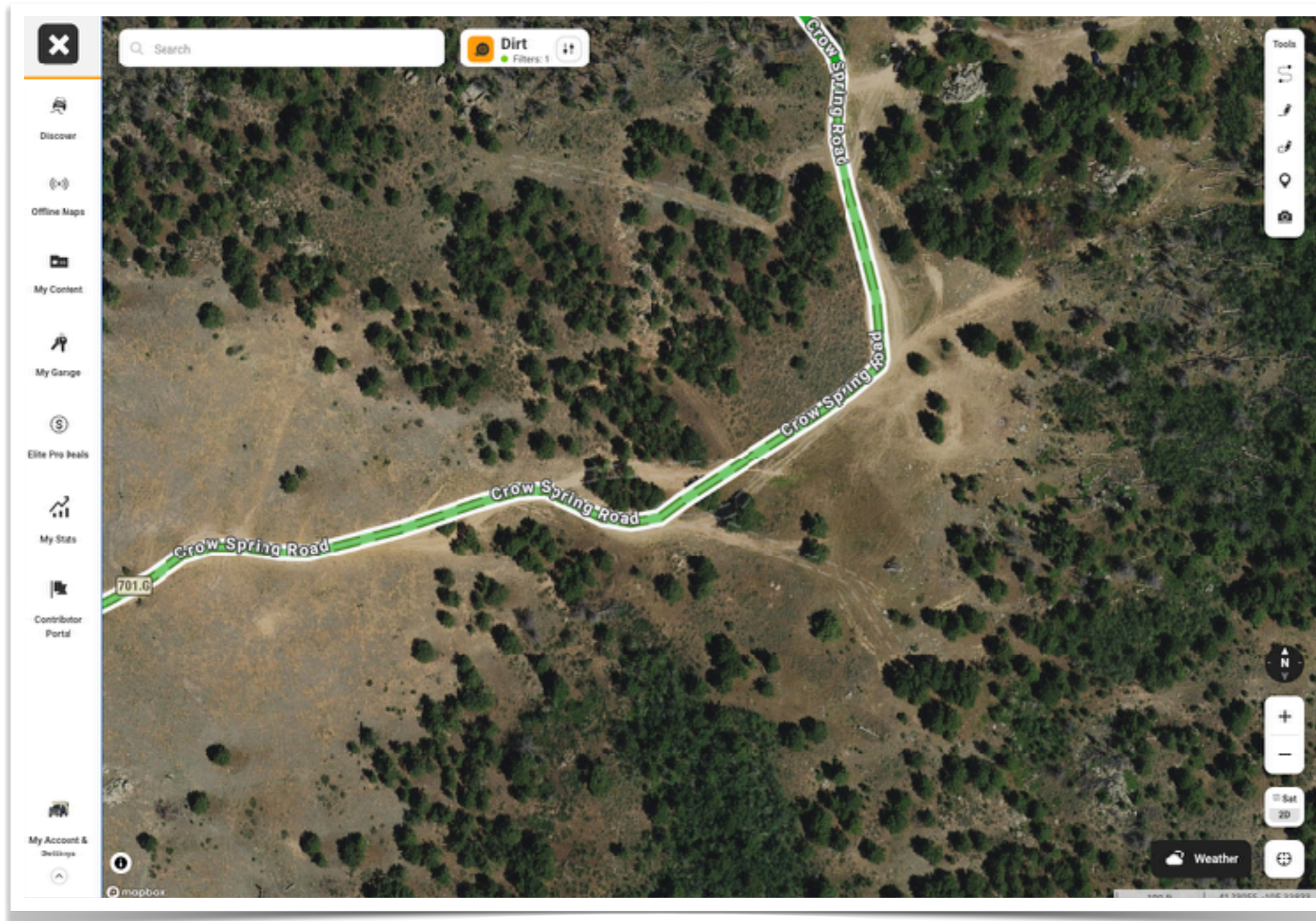
# Stay on the trail: through water

## Driving



**At Camp**

# Use Existing Campsites At Camp



# Where can you dispersed camp?

## General Guidelines

In general, you can dispersed camp on USFS or BLM public land unless otherwise posted and while following dispersed camping regulations.



# Choosing A Dispersed Campsite

## General Guidelines

- **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 away from water** (ex river, lake, marsh) and brittle banks
- **Camp within 100-300 feet of designated motorized trails**
- Check **local regulations** and **read signs**



# Use Existing Campsites

## At Camp



# Use Existing Campsites

## At Camp



# MVUM Map for Dispersed Camping Regulations At Camp

### PURPOSE AND CONTENTS OF THIS MAP

The designations shown on this map are for informational purposes only. They do not constitute a guarantee, warranty, or endorsement of any product or service mentioned herein. The user assumes all liability for any use of this map. The designations shown on this map are for informational purposes only. They do not constitute a guarantee, warranty, or endorsement of any product or service mentioned herein. The user assumes all liability for any use of this map.

### PROHIBITIONS

It is prohibited to possess or operate a motor vehicle on any road or trail that is designated as a dispersed camping area. This prohibition applies to all vehicles, including motorcycles, mopeds, and ATVs. It is also prohibited to use any road or trail that is designated as a dispersed camping area for any purpose other than dispersed camping. This prohibition applies to all vehicles, including motorcycles, mopeds, and ATVs.

### OPERATOR RESPONSIBILITIES

Operators of motor vehicles on any road or trail that is designated as a dispersed camping area are responsible for ensuring that their vehicle is properly equipped for dispersed camping. This includes having a spare tire, a first aid kit, and a fire extinguisher. Operators are also responsible for ensuring that their vehicle is properly maintained and that they are familiar with the road or trail conditions. Operators are also responsible for ensuring that they are following all applicable laws and regulations.

## Pole Mountain

#### Dispersed Camping/Camp Retrieval

Roads are open to dispersed camping for the purpose of dispersed camping and retrieval. This includes roads that are open to dispersed camping and roads that are open to dispersed camping and retrieval. This includes roads that are open to dispersed camping and roads that are open to dispersed camping and retrieval.

#### Seasonal Designations

Roads open to all vehicles, with seasonal designation

Route Number	Days Allowed	Beginning Mile Post	Ending Mile Post	Length
78A, 79A, 79B, 79C, 79D, 79E, 79F, 79G, 79H, 79I, 79J, 79K, 79L, 79M, 79N, 79O, 79P, 79Q, 79R, 79S, 79T, 79U, 79V, 79W, 79X, 79Y, 79Z	06/01/09 - 09/30/09			

### INFORMATION SOURCES

Medicine Bow - Road National Forest Headquarters  
 2465 JACKSON STREET  
 LARAMIE, WYOMING 82070  
 Phone: (307) 745-2300

Ecotone Ranger District  
 2418 JACKSON STREET  
 LARAMIE, WYOMING 82070  
 Phone: (307) 745-2300

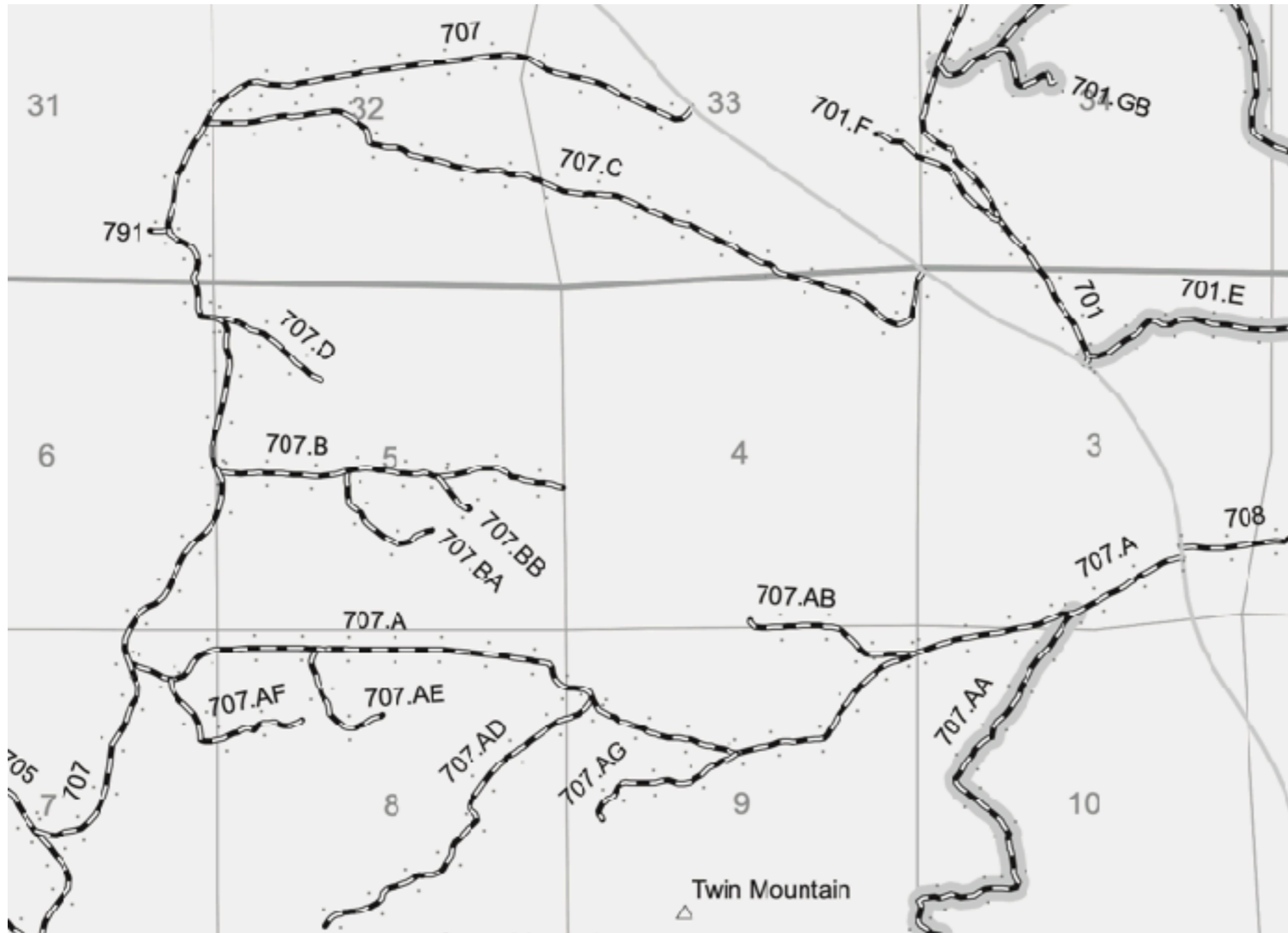
Medicine Bow National Forest website: www.fs.fed.us/medbo

In case of emergency: 911

treadlightly!  
 www.treadlightly.com

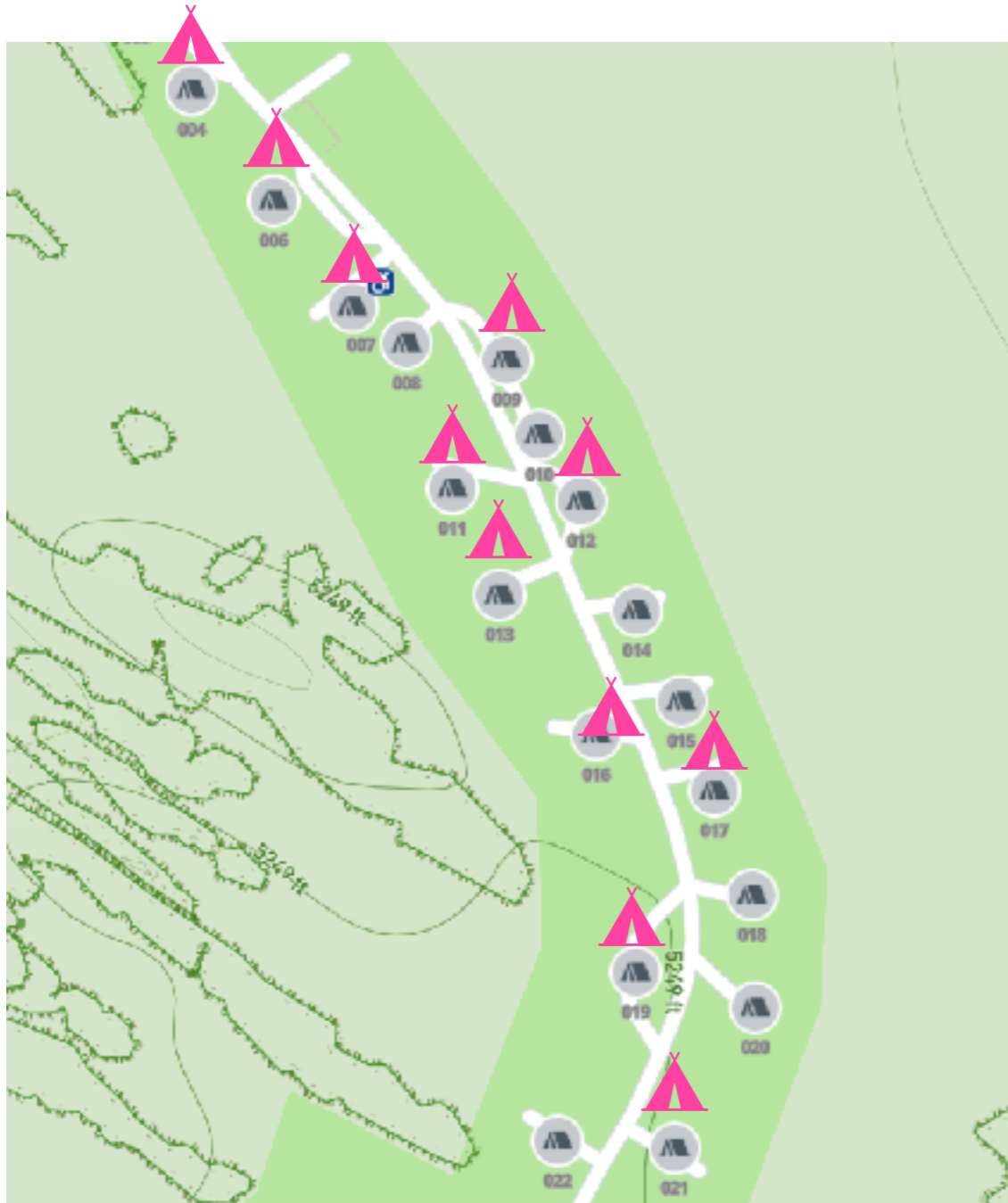
# MVUM Map for Dispersed Camping Regulations

## At Camp

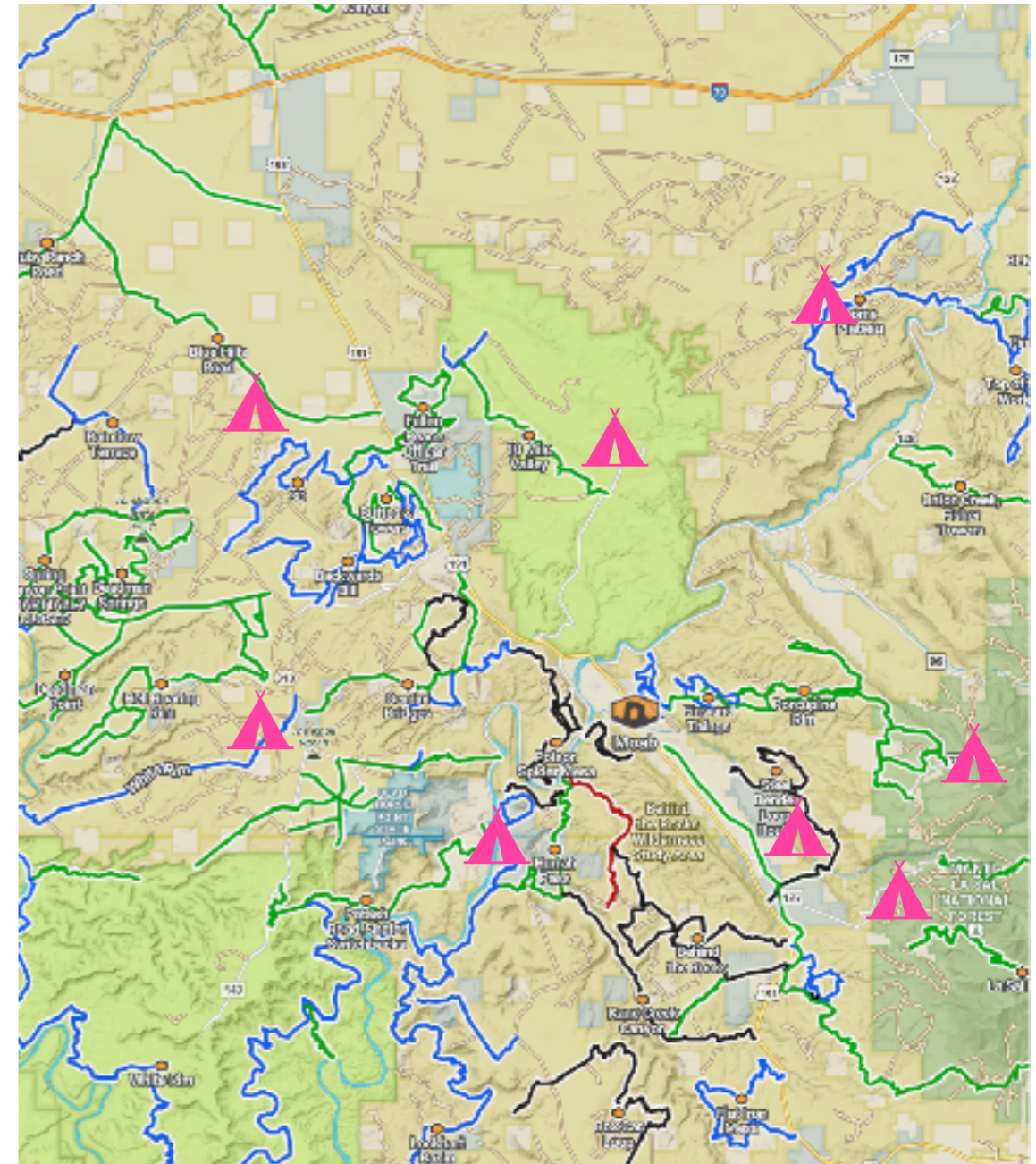


# Visit Less Used / Known Areas

## At Camp



VS



# **#2 Trash & Waste**

**Biggest Opportunities**

**Grey Water**

# 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)



<https://kayplumbing.com/what-is-greywater/>

# 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, campgrounds, RV parks, or toilet (if necessary); iOverlander is a good resource



# Using Less Water - Dishes

## Grey Water

- **Wipe dishes before washing** with bread / tortilla (yummy snack) or paper towels
- **3 Basin Dish Washing:** wash, hot rinse, cold rinse (bleach optional)
- **Low flow sink / hose head**



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

# Using Less Water - Hygiene

## Grey Water

- Low flow aerator / shower head



- Geyser shower



- Use wipes vs showing



# Biodegradable Products

## Grey Water

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



**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



**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
- Use WAG Bags for emergencies and while away from camp and vehicle
- **Pack out pet waste too**



# 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 solid waste.



**Trash**

# Trash Decomposition

## Waste

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



# ~~Burn~~ Pack Out Trash

## Waste

- **Pack out trash** instead of burning
- **Trash often doesn't completely burn** leaving behind trash, food, and hazards (ex broken glass)
- **Burn wood completely to ash**; it's also a form of "waste" that the next user might not want



# Trash Disposal Waste

- Bag trash / recycling in **smaller quantities** (2-3 gallons) for easier disposal
- Dispose of at visitor's centers, campgrounds, trail heads, 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



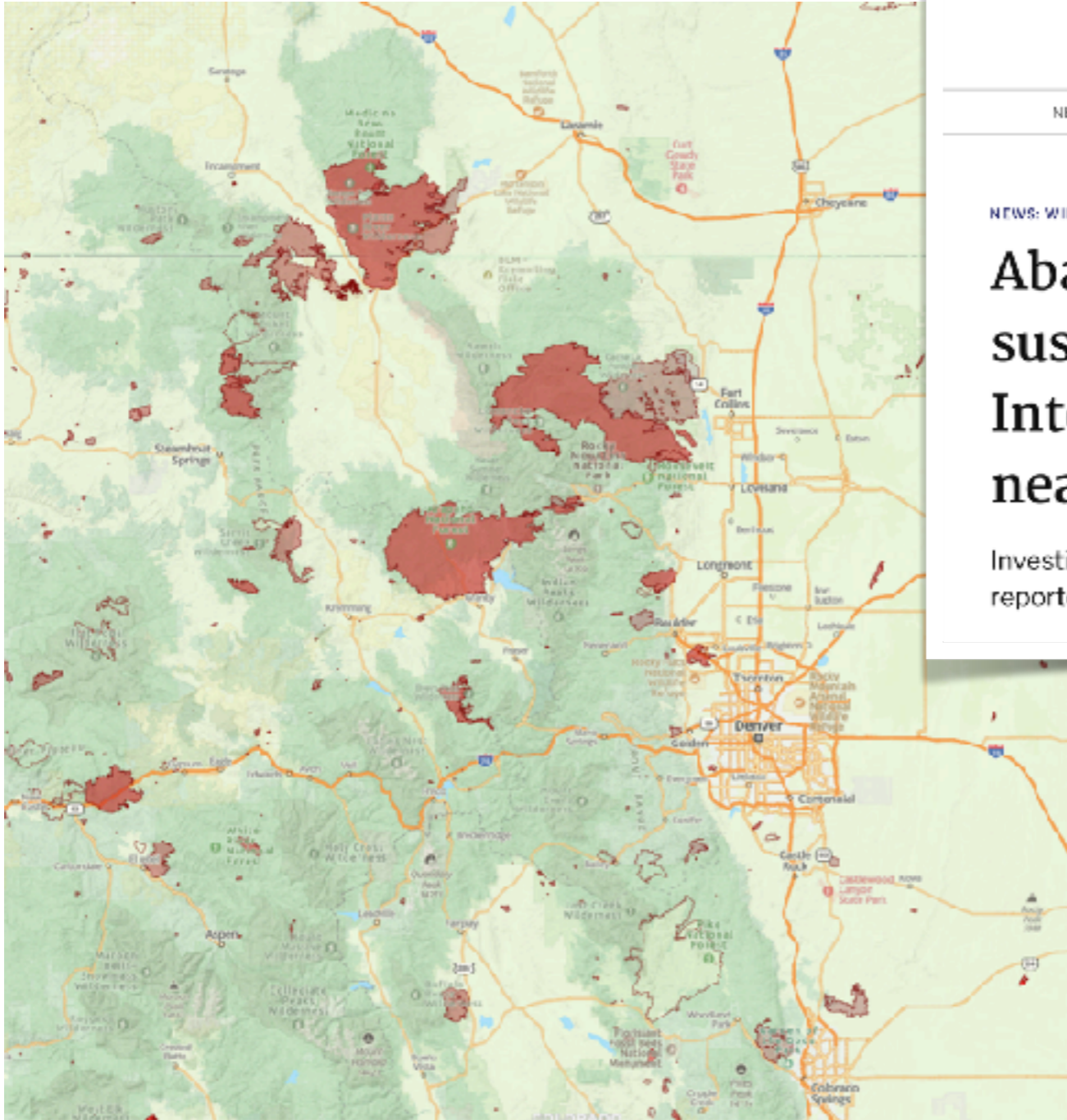


# **#4 Campfires**

**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”

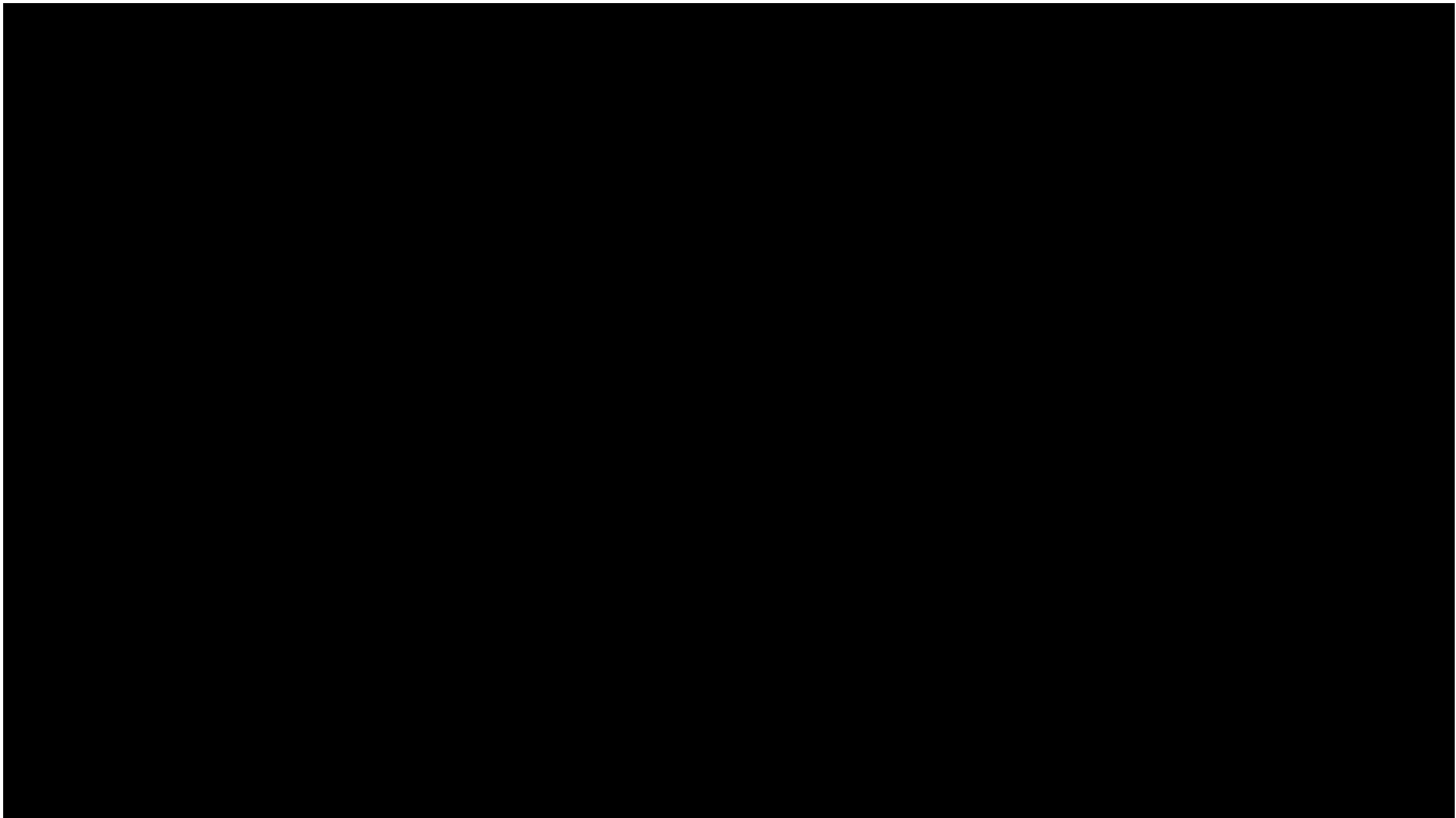
## Campfires

1. **Burn wood down** to 2” pieces or ashes
2. **Drown with water** / grey water
3. **Stir** and mix
4. **Check for heat** with hand
5. **Repeat** as needed
6. **Check again** before leaving camp



# Making “Campfire Soup”

## Campfires



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

# Propane Firepits

## Campfires

- Reduces forest fire risk
- Great option when there's a **fire ban**



# Collecting Firewood

## Campfires

- 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
- Obtain firewood **cut within ~50 miles** or collect firewood if allowed to reduce bug spread; kiln dried isn't necessarily bug free

# **#5 Neighbors**

**Biggest Opportunities**

# Be A Good Neighbor

## Neighbors



- **Leave some space** between you and your neighbors
- **Minimize light and sound**, especially at night
  - Turn off lights at night (ex “porch lights”)
  - Use battery banks, solar, DC / DC chargers to minimize noise
- **Smile and say hi!** Maybe you’ll find a new friend and go on a trip together!



# 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, etc)
  - Leave space for animals and livestock especially near water sources (behavior change means you're too close)

# **#6 Social Media Sharing**

**Super Bonus Opportunity!**

# Reducing Over Use

## Social Media Sharing

Automated social media **algorithms can unexpectedly share your posts with 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 to** 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

# 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.”*



# Slides + Follow Our Journey

Slides + Links to Resources

[go.banthaoverland.com/expoeast24](https://go.banthaoverland.com/expoeast24)

Follow along for route planning and dispersed camping tips, DIY overland gear, and our travels mixing work and play

[banthaoverland.com](https://banthaoverland.com)



@banthaoverland



@banthaoverland

Rate this and other sessions in the Overland Expo app