



Hike on the Blue Mountains Trail:

Elkhorn Crest Trail - 2-3 Day Backpack

Departing from the **Marble Pass Trailhead**, near **Baker City, Oregon**, or from **Anthony Lakes Campground** at **Anthony Lakes, Oregon**, the Elkhorn Crest Trail runs for over 22 miles along the spine of the Elkhorn Mountains. Mountain goats are abundant along the range. The best camping and water resupply spots along the way are at the various alpine lakes that are 1 to 2 miles from the main trail. We recommend taking a shuttle to the Marble Pass Trailhead to start your hike.



THE STATS:

Recreation type: 2 day backpack

Route type: One way with shuttle, or out-and-back

Mileage: 22.5 miles one way, plus added distance to camping at Twin Lakes and Summit Lake

Duration: 2+ days

Elevation gain (gross): 3,816 feet

Active time hiking (estimated): 14 hours round trip

Time of year: July to October

Physical difficulty: Difficult

Logistical difficulty: Challenging, 4WD vehicle recommended to Marble Pass TH, and 2 vehicles may be needed for a shuttle

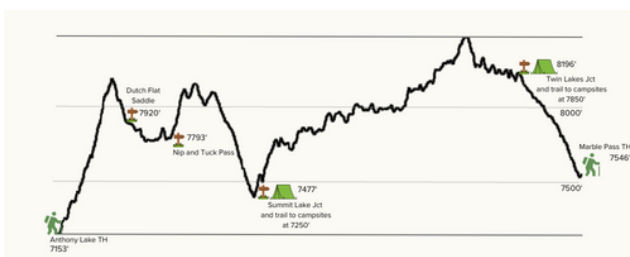
Permits required: Free, self-issued Wilderness permit at the trailhead. Group size limited to 12 people. All other wilderness restrictions apply.

TRIP DESCRIPTION:

The Elkhorn Crest National Recreation Trail runs from Anthony Lakes to Marble Pass along the crest of the Elkhorn Mountain Range. Parts of the trail are in the North Fork John Day Wilderness, while other parts that are not designated wilderness are popular with mountain bikers. Day hikers are usually found closest to Anthony Lakes or hiking from Marble Pass to Twin Lakes.

If you plan to do this as a one-way hike, you will need to have two vehicles to set up the shuttle, or you can find a private operator to meet you at the trailhead at Anthony Lakes and drive you Marble Pass. The driving time between trailheads takes about 1 hour. If you have one vehicle, you can hike it as a 4 day out-and-back or simply shorten your trip.

At approximately one mile past the junction to Twin Lakes, you can scramble up the west face or Rock Creek Butte to reach the high point of the Elkhorns at 9,106 feet and sign the summit register kept on the rock cairn. Mountain goats were reintroduced into the Elkhorns, and this population continues to thrive. Please keep your distance. You will also want to prepare to hike long distances between water resupplies. The best place to fill water along the trail is at one of the alpine lakes, but these generally require a 1 mile hike from the main trail. There is one reliable spring on the main trail near the junction with the trail to Summit Lake; it is marked on the hiking map.



More information about and resources for the Blue Mountains Trail are available online at hells canyon.org/blue-mountains-trail

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The Blue Mountains Trail was developed and is operated by Greater Hells Canyon Council. This trip report was published in 2024.

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TRIP DESCRIPTION, CONT:

The North Fork John Day Wilderness was designated and protected in by the U.S Congress in 1984, and it encompasses over 120,000 acres. The North Fork John Day River is the coldest of the tributaries to the mainsteam John Day. The Elkhorn Crest Trail is gaining popularity and seeing increased visitation. You can join us in reporting recreation impacts or areas that need additional maintenance using the Recreation Impacts Monitoring System (RIMS) app (contact us for details and to sign up or download the app and get started). This area is also still recovering from past mining impacts, and it supports abundant wildlife; when hiking here, please follow Leave No Trace principles.

BEFORE AND AFTER IN BAKER CITY:

Baker City is a full-service city that is not directly on the Blue Mountains Trail, but it can serve as a starting/ending point for section hikes on the Elkhorn Crest. It can also be reached via transit or the Elkhorn Taxi from Sumpter. It is one of the larger towns in Northeast Oregon, with many great restaurants, lodging options, and other amenities.

On Friday mornings at 8am, The Trailhead in Baker City runs a shuttle from Anthony Lakes to the Marble Pass Trailhead. You can reserve a spot by contacting the shop. A web search can also turn up additional individuals who offer a private shuttle service.

When visiting Baker City, we recommend stopping for a bite and a beer at Barley Brown's Brew Pub, picking up treats from Sweet Wife Baking, and staying at the historic Geyser Grand Hotel on Main Street. Hiking provisions and gear can be picked up at the Trailhead or ACE Hardware, and food at the Baker City Coop or one of the other large grocery stores in town.

For a full list of amenities, including markets, accommodations, post offices, public transit options, and more places to eat and stay, check out the Blue Mountains Trail Town Guides for Baker City. On weekend in the summer months, Anthony Lakes opens the Starbottle Saloon where you can get pub fare at the base of the ski resort.

TRIP PLANNING INFORMATION AND LINKS:

Trailhead access points: Marble Pass Trailhead

USFS webpage: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/recarea/wallowa-whitman/recarea/?recid=52491>

Google Maps: <https://maps.app.goo.gl/UVXXHf43qb6zfb628>

Elkhorn Crest Trailhead at Anthony Lakes

USFS webpage: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/recarea/wallowa-whitman/recarea/?recid=52401>

Google Maps: <https://maps.app.goo.gl/ZDobs2cHZWWHgKZ46>

Nearby town guides for Baker City and Anthony Lakes:

<https://www.hellscanyon.org/blue-mountains-trail/towns/baker>

<https://www.hellscanyon.org/blue-mountains-trail/towns/anthonylakes>

Local US Forest Service Office:

Wallowa Whitman National Forest, Whitman Ranger District (Baker City), 541-523-6391

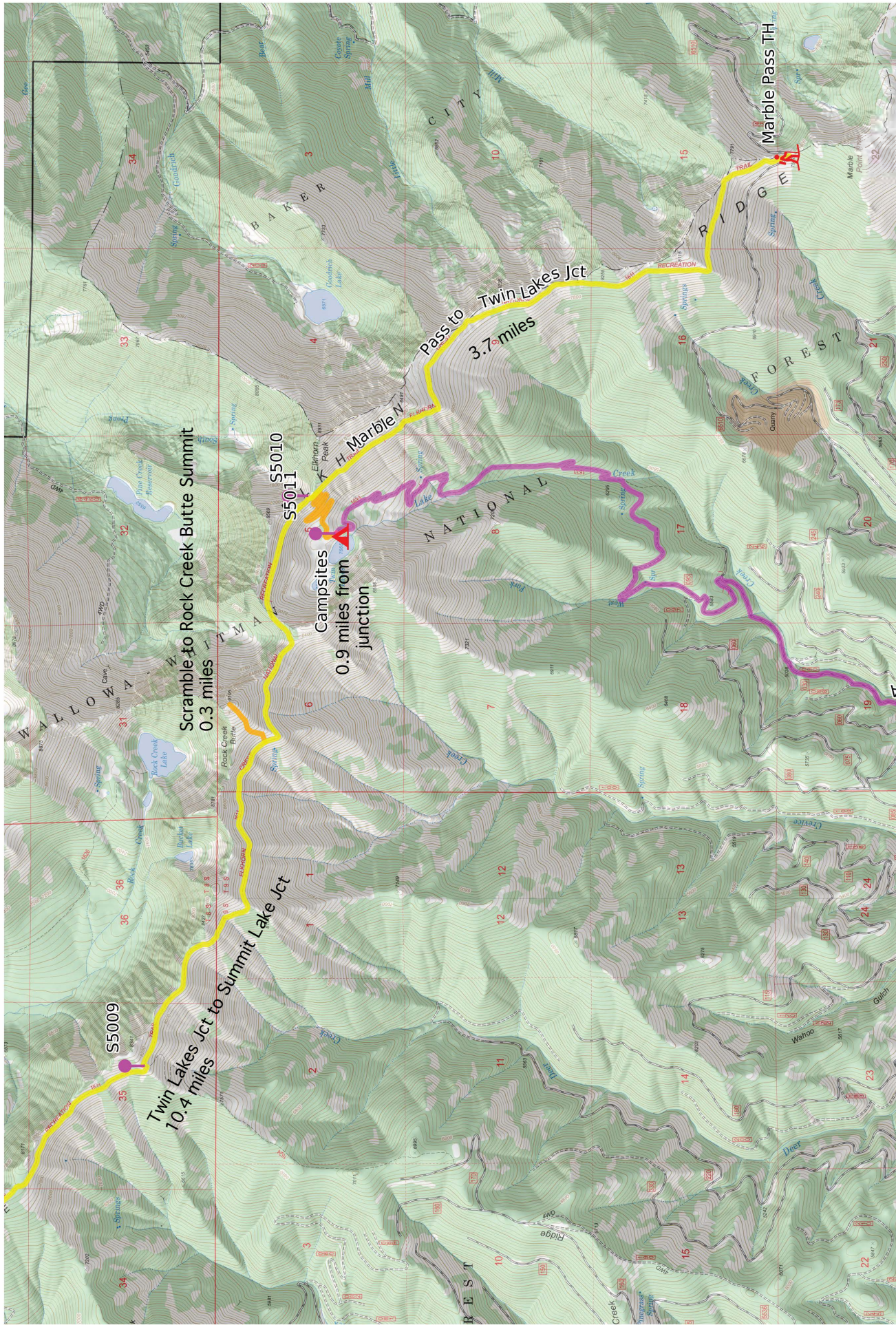
Trail conditions: Elkhorn Crest National Scenic Trail #1611

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/wallowa-whitman/alerts-notice/?cid=stelprdb5313912>

Weather forecast at Twin Lakes via the National Weather Service:

<https://forecast.weather.gov/MapClick.php?lat=44.808&lon=-118.0867>

Credit for photos as follows: Front page: Jared Kennedy



Elkhorn Crest Trail on the BMT 1/3

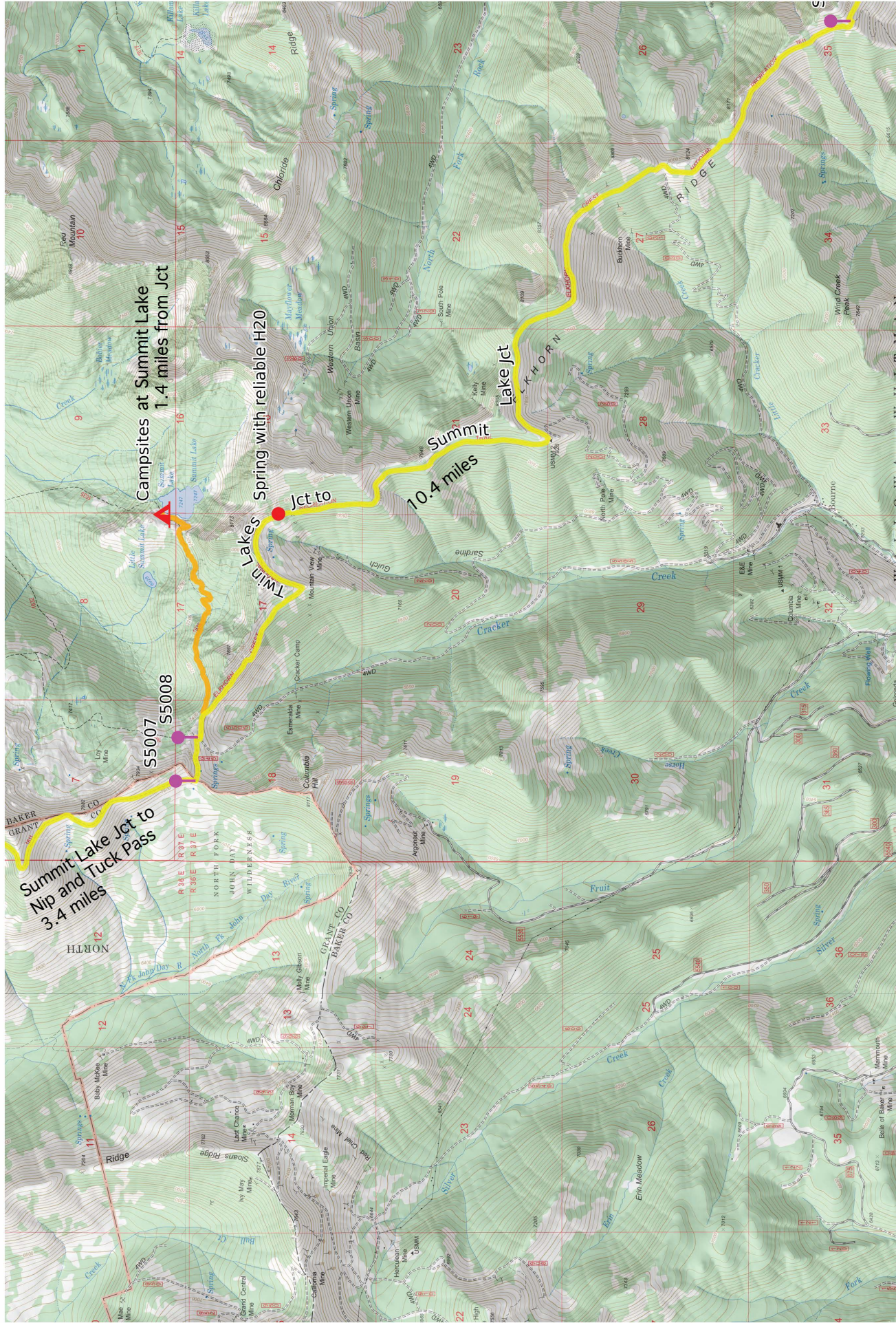
WG84
UTM Zone 11T

Scale 1:45000 1 inch = 3750 feet

8 km
4 mi

MN 13.6°

CALTOPO



Elkhorn Crest Trail on the BMT 2/3 1

WGS84

UTM Zone 11T

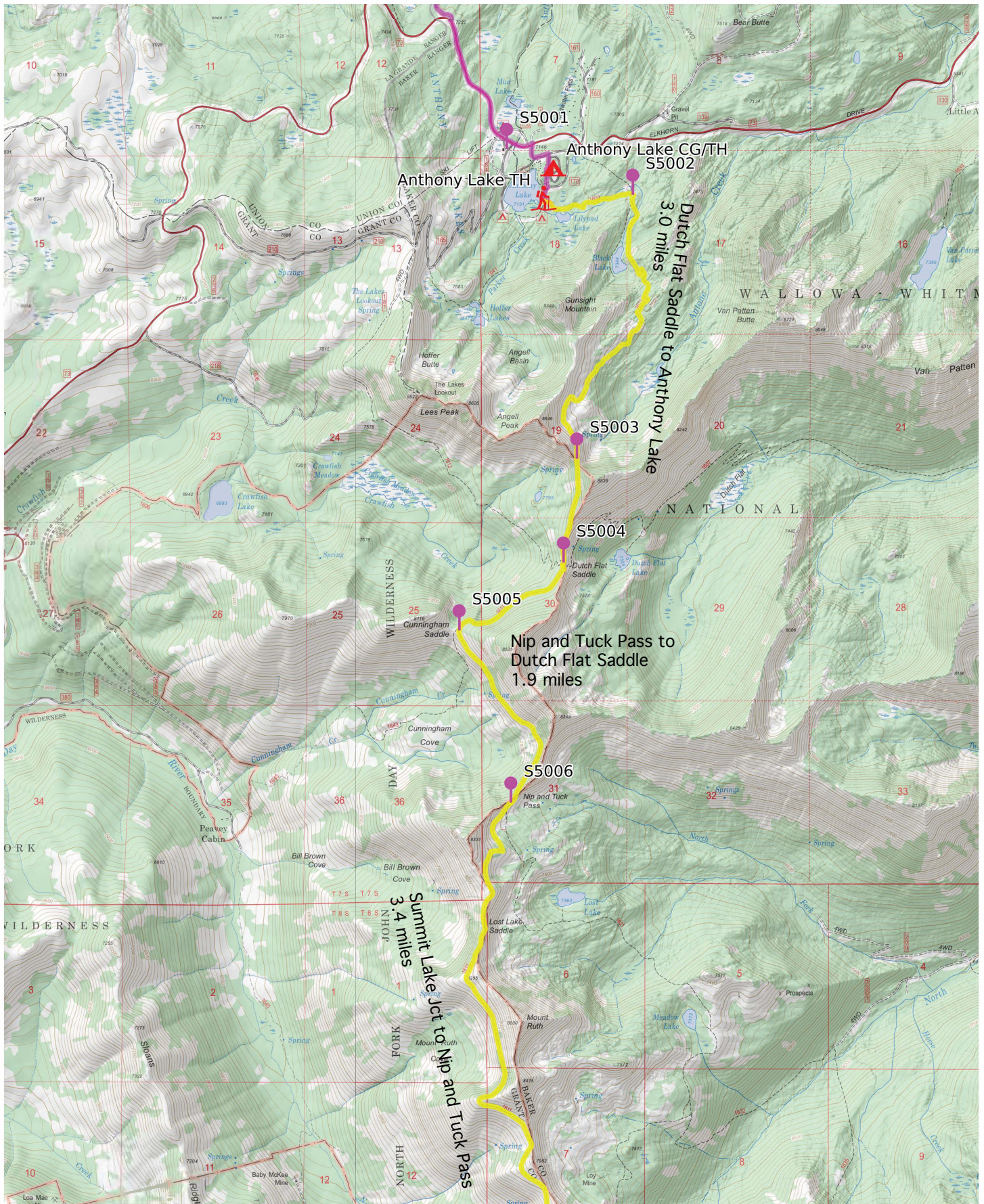
CALTOPO

Scale 1:45000 1 inch = 3750 feet

2 3 4 5 6 7 8 km

1 2 3 4 mi

MN 13.7°



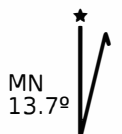
Elkhorn Crest Trail on the BMT 3/3 1 2 3 4 5 6km

WGS84

UTM Zone 11T



Scale 1:45000 1 inch = 3750 feet



MN 13.7°