

## South Fork Trail - White Mountain Wilderness

**South Fork Trail** (#19) generally follows the South Fork Rio Bonito. The trail crosses the stream numerous times but split logs, strategically placed rocks and low-water levels combine to make the crossings easy.

Just past the first crossing, the trail passes the ruins of some old buildings. This site was homesteaded originally back in the late 1800s. Notice the remains of an old steel-wrapped wooden pipeline along the trail in this area. The pipeline transferred high-quality water to Carrizozo to be used in steam locomotives. The line was taken out of service upon completion of Bonito Dam.



Entering the White Mountain Wilderness Just past the second stream crossing, the remains of a diversion structure, which funneled water into the pipeline, can be seen beneath a bluff on the opposite bank.

A mile from the Trailhead, the South Fork Trail intersects with Bluefront Trail (#33). A 12 mile loop is possible using both the Bluefront Trail (#33) and the South Fork Trail (#19). see [this article](#) for more information.



A meadow along South fork trail. The South Fork Trail climbs gently up the canyon for another three miles and then becomes progressively steeper over the last two miles. The last mile is particularly brutal as the trail emerges at the base of a large meadow and then begins switch-backing up the slope to the second intersection with Bluefront Trail (#33). This intersection is marked with a sign.

### **Camping**

Camping locations are periodically available along the lower 4 miles of the South Fork Trail. The higher you hike, the less level ground you will find.

Water is plentiful in the stream except for the uppermost mile of the trail. The only water source on top is at the upper end of the trail where it intersects with Bluefront and Crest Trails. Follow Crest Trail (#25) 200 yards to the northwest toward Elk Point, and you will find a poly tube with good water flowing slowly out of it.



Fallen timber blocks the trail at about 4 miles.**Trail  
Conditions as of May 2009**

At about the four mile point the trail is pretty bad shape because of flooding from previous years (possibly 2008). There are many large trees blocking the trail which will force you to do some bushwhacking ? and this is all at the steepest, most brutal point of the hike. It is not impassable, but is difficult, especially with overnight gear.

**More Information**

There is a great article by John Hughes ([Elite Outfitters](#)) on Ruidoso.net. John's article is largely the source for the information on this page. Read the [full article](#) for more information on this wonderful hike. Also see the [Wikipedia page for the Sierra Blanca mountains](#) for further info and links.

**See also:**

- <http://www.sangres.com/newmexico/wilderness/whitemountain.htm>