

Fishing

Interior Alaska is home to several species of sport fish, but the Arctic grayling is the most common in Nome Creek. The Arctic grayling is known for its distinctive large dorsal fin and iridescent silver-purple coloring. Grayling are easily caught using lure or flies, but in the Nome Creek Valley, they are **catch-and-release** only. You can significantly improve the odds of a fish surviving by properly handling and releasing it:

- Pinch the barb or use a barbless hook to prevent injuring the fish.
- Bring the fish in quickly so as not to exhaust it. Never let it flop over rocks or on dry land.
- Keep the fish in water, cradling it gently under its belly and tail. Never squeeze the fish.
- Keep the fish underwater and remove the hook quickly and gently. If the hook is too deep, cut the line at the hook.
- Holding the fish upright, point head first into a slow current and gently move back and forth until the gills are working properly.
- Don't release the fish until it attempts to swim away.



Beaver Creek Wild and Scenic River

Just past the entrance to the Ophir Creek Campground is the put-in for floating to Beaver Creek Wild and Scenic River. A small parking area provides a place to organize equipment and prepare for your float trip. A long-term parking area is located just past the Ophir Creek Campground entrance. After three river miles of floating on Nome Creek, you will join Beaver Creek.

Floating Beaver Creek can take from seven days to three weeks. Make arrangements with an air taxi for a gravel bar pick-up or be prepared for an extended, 360-mile trip to the take-out at the Dalton Highway Bridge on the Yukon River. Launching of boats with motors greater than 15 horsepower is prohibited in Nome Creek.

How to Get to Nome Creek

From Fairbanks, take the Steese Highway to mile 57 and follow the U.S. Creek Road for seven miles to the Nome Creek Road. Four miles up the valley to the right are the Quartz Creek Trailhead and the Mount Prindle Campground. Twelve miles down the valley to the left are the Ophir Creek Campground and the put-in for floating Beaver Creek.

Want to Know More?

Bureau of Land Management
Eastern Interior Field Office
222 University Avenue
Fairbanks, Alaska 99709-3816

Phone: 907-474-2200 or 1-800-437-7021
Website: www.blm.gov/alaska
Email: EasternInterior@blm.gov



Nome Creek lies about 45 miles northeast of Fairbanks in the one-million-acre White Mountains National Recreation Area. For most of the twentieth century, Nome Creek was mined for gold. Today, visitors come here to enjoy a variety of outdoor recreation opportunities.

If you like to camp, hike, gold pan, fish, or just relax in the outdoors, come see what Nome Creek has to offer.

Nome Creek History

Nome Creek valley has a long history of mining. After the first gold discovery in 1910, independent miners spent several decades working their claims with hand tools: picks, shovels, and rocker boxes. Between the 1920s and 1940s gold dredges worked the creek, digging and scooping up gravel at one end, extracting the gold, and depositing the tailings out the other end. Tailings from one of the dredges, in a peculiar, maze-shaped formation, can still be seen in the creek at one of the turnouts on the western section of Nome Creek Road. Bulldozers became available and affordable after World War II, and quickly became a favorite choice for miners.

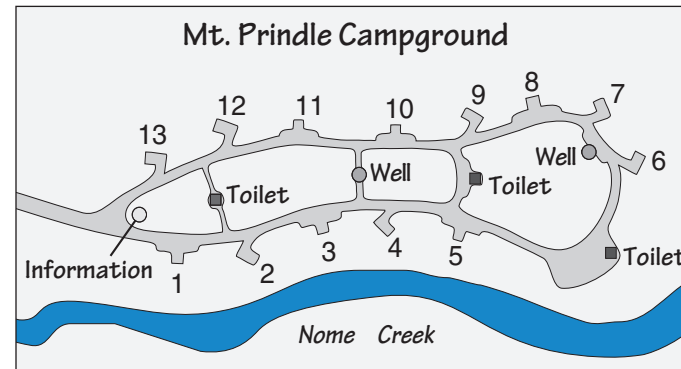
When the valley became part of the White Mountains National Recreation Area, the BLM began reclamation on the creek. The area upstream from the bridge has been recontoured and new banks reconstructed to mimic the creek's natural shape.



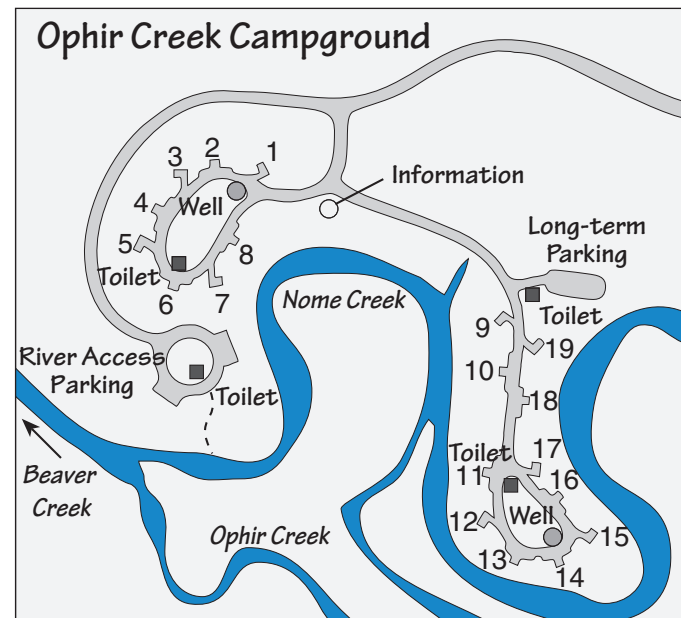
The Maze on Nome Creek.

Campgrounds

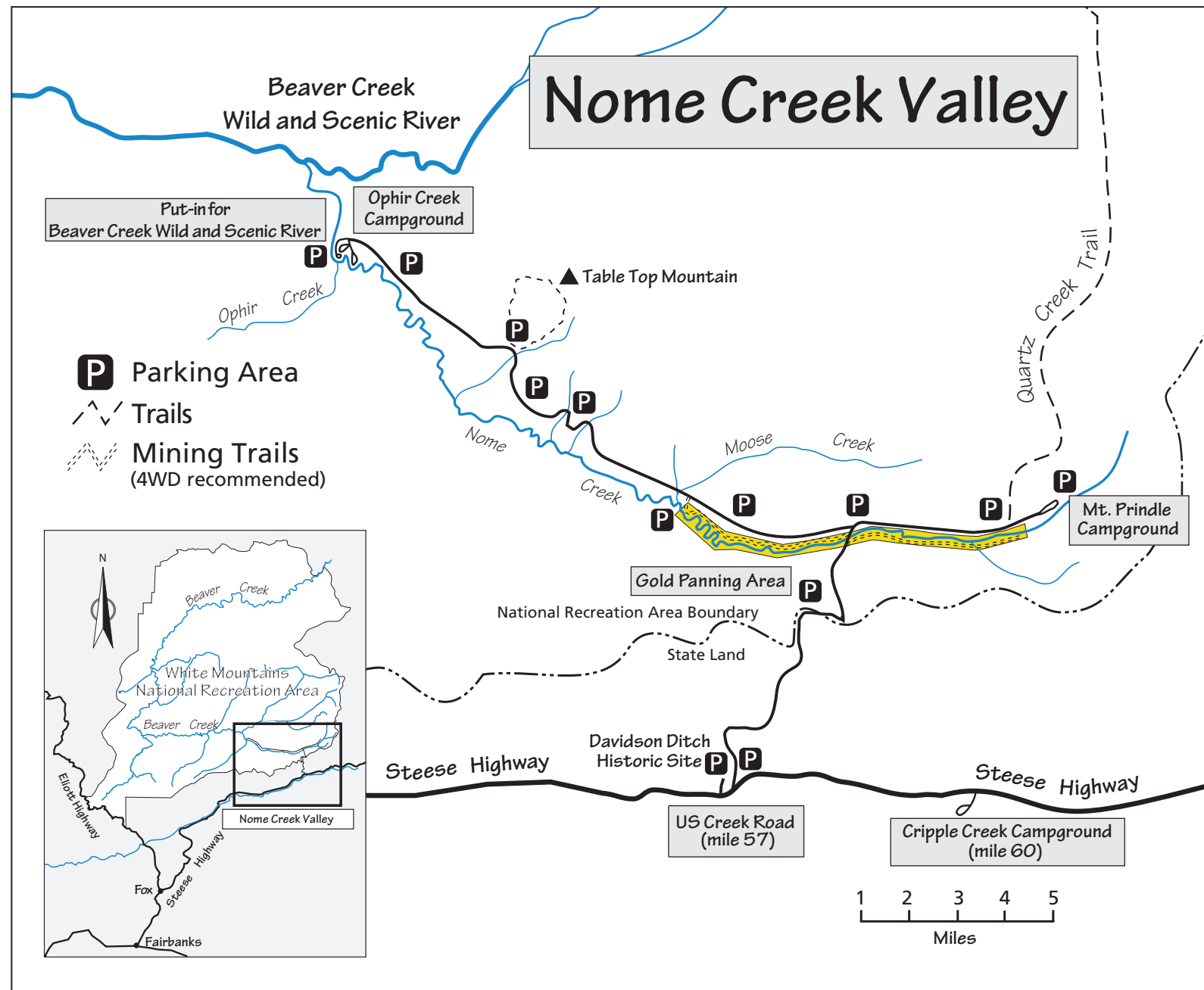
There are two campgrounds in the White Mountains National Recreation Area, each offering a different experience. Both are recreation fee sites equipped with pull-through and back-in sites, well water, trash cans, wheelchair-accessible outhouse-style toilets, picnic tables, and fire rings.



The **Mount Prindle Campground**, located at the upper end of the valley, has 13 campsites. This campground is near the Quartz Creek Trail, alpine tundra meadows, and Mount Prindle (5,286 feet), making it an ideal spot to begin a trip into the high country.



The **Ophir Creek Campground** is at the lower end of Nome Creek and has 19 campsites. The campground is nestled in tall white spruce trees on the banks of Nome Creek. Here, you can enjoy catch-and-release fishing for Arctic grayling,



make the climb to Table Top Mountain, or start an extended float trip on Beaver Creek Wild and Scenic River.

Trails

There are two developed trails in Nome Creek valley. The 16-mile **Quartz Creek Trail** crosses alpine tundra hillsides and passes through white spruce forest valleys with cold, mountain streams. Used by hikers and off-highway vehicle riders, this trail also serves as a boundary between a multi-use area and a non-motorized-use area to the east.

Table Top Mountain Trail is a three-mile loop designated for non-motorized use only. As the trail climbs above treeline, it passes through a regenerating spruce forest burned in a 2004 wildfire. A short side trip to the summit of the mesa-shaped mountain (elevation 3,130 ft) is well worth the extra effort.

Adventures await those who are willing to venture off the beaten path. From Nome Creek, several ridges lead northward to the high country around Lime Peak. These areas offer spectacular views of high alpine

tundra, granite tors, and limestone cliffs. Dall sheep, caribou, moose, and grizzly bear are commonly seen throughout the area.

Travel in Interior Alaska can be a challenge. Usually the valley bottoms are wet and boggy with knee-deep tussocks that can wear out even the hardest hiker, while the ridges offer the best hiking and views during the summer. Be sure to travel prepared for sudden changes in weather and other unexpected situations. Have an adequate supply of food and water, even for a short trip.

Gold Panning

Want to try your luck at gold panning like the Alaska sourdoughs? Nome Creek has a recreational gold panning area. Only hand tools and light equipment such as gold pans, rocker boxes, sluice boxes, and metal detectors are allowed. Motorized equipment, including suction dredges and pumps, is not permitted in this area. Before you take pan in hand, remember that even simple tools can impact the land:

- Use back eddies and side pools to reduce the amount of dirt and silt entering the main stream channel. Silt carried downstream can cover and destroy fish spawning beds.
- Work only in the stream channels or on unvegetated gravel bars to protect bank stability and prevent erosion.



Panning for gold on a Nome Creek gravel bar.