

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

# Hart Mountain

*National Antelope  
Refuge*



*More than 30 million pronghorn antelope once roamed North America. By the turn of the 20th century, only a few small bands were left. Hart Mountain was one of the*



*last strongholds of this  
fleet-footed species.*

*Set aside as a home for  
pronghorn, the refuge is  
renowned as a dramatic  
landscape rich in  
wildlife diversity.*





*Photo: Bill Stormont, FWS*

## The Refuge

Hart Mountain National Antelope Refuge (NAR) was established in 1936 to provide range for remnant antelope herds. Refuge management practices have since been broadened to include conservation of all wildlife and native plant species characteristic of this high-desert habitat. Public enjoyment, education, and appreciation for the species and habitat found here is encouraged.



Hart Mountain NAR is one of over 520 National Wildlife Refuges located throughout the country. The blue goose insignia represents this network of lands established for the conservation and management of fish, wildlife, and plant resources for the benefit of present and future generations.

## The Landscape



*Photo: Ruth Miller, FWS*

Looming high above the surrounding rangelands, Hart Mountain NAR is a massive fault block ridge that rises to an elevation of 8,065 feet. The west side ascends abruptly some 3,600 feet from the floor of the Warner Valley in a series of rugged cliffs, steep slopes, and knifelike ridges.



*Photo: Bill Stormont, FWS*

The east side of the mountain is less precipitous, descending in a series of hills and low ridges to the sagebrush-grass ranges typical of southeastern Oregon and the Great Basin.

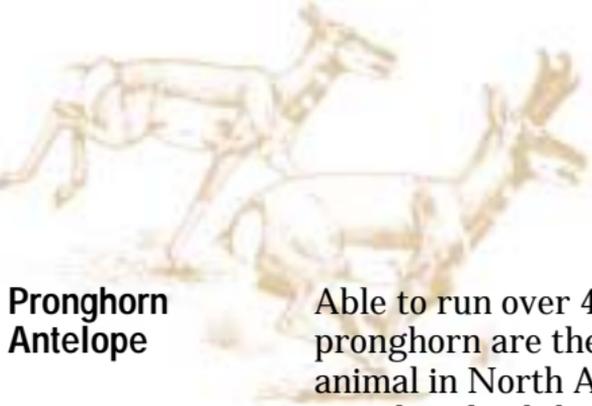


*Photo: Bill Stormont, FWS*

The Refuge is an oasis in the desert, watered by many fine springs. Combined with snow melt, these springs feed many seasonal and year-round creeks. A natural hot spring nestled against the eastern base of Warner Peak provides a soothing retreat for area visitors.

Water is a valuable commodity in this dry desert landscape. Precipitation (an average of 12" annually) comes primarily as winter snow or spring rains. Temperatures vary between extreme cold in the winter and very hot, dry summer conditions.





## Pronghorn Antelope



Able to run over 45 miles-per-hour, pronghorn are the fastest land animal in North America. Their great speed evolved thousands of years ago at a time when two species of cheetahs hunted in North America. Healthy pronghorn can outrun any modern-day predator. Coyotes, bobcats, and golden eagles are a threat only in the first few weeks of a pronghorn's life.

About the size of a large house cat at birth, pronghorn grow to over 100 pounds. Most of this weight is amassed in their thick bodies with extremely large lungs necessary for distance running. Pronghorn rely on speed and keen vision for protection. Their large eyes see the world as you would if using binoculars with 8 power magnification.

Female pronghorn give birth to twins each year in May or early June. Until they are able to run with the herd, fawns are kept hidden in the low sagebrush and grasses of the fawning grounds.







*Mule Deer Buck*

## Wildlife Diversity

Photo: C. Reeb, FWS



*Red-naped sapsucker*



*Ground squirrels*

Photo: R. Blacker, FWS



*Poorwill*



*Horned lizard*

Photo: K. Voget, FWS



*Killedeer*

Diversity in habitat creates variety in wildlife. Hart Mountain NAR's diverse landscape and habitat are alive with over 300 species of wildlife, primarily birds (239 species) and mammals (42 species). Mammals such as pronghorn, deer, coyotes, and rabbits are generally year-round residents of the Refuge while most birds come and go with the seasons.

Hart Mountain NAR is renowned for its upland habitat and wildlife: pronghorn race across the low sagebrush expanses of the refuge's east side, sage grouse nest under large sagebrush bushes in the heart of the refuge, mule deer roam the mountain mahogany and bitterbrush habitats found at higher elevations, and big-horn sheep nimbly scale the rocky cliffs of the refuge's west face.

Other important areas on the refuge for wildlife include shallow playa lakes, grassy meadows watered by springs, riparian areas along stream-sides, aspen stands, and secluded pine groves. Habitats closely associated with water support the greatest richness of wildlife species.

Photo: Blyth Brown





## Sage Grouse

The drumming chest and elaborate strut of the male sage grouse is a renowned spectacle of the high desert. This early morning courtship dance occurs on numerous refuge strutting grounds (leks) in late March and April. Once bred, hens build a nest, generally under a sagebrush bush, and lay about 9 eggs. Grouse were once so plentiful that settlers gathered buckets of eggs for camp fare. Through careful research and management, it is hoped that sage grouse will recover some of their former abundance.



## Bighorn Sheep



Agile California bighorn sheep move skillfully in the steep and rugged terrain on the west face of Hart Mountain and Poker Jim Ridge. A ram's massive, curled horns, which can weigh nearly 30 pounds, set it apart from the female sheep whose horns are much smaller.

Once abundant, these majestic animals fell victim to diseases from domestic livestock and over-hunting and were eliminated from Hart Mountain by 1915. A very successful process of reintroduction began in 1954. Now several hundred bighorn sheep call the Refuge home.



## Wildlife Viewing

Viewing wildlife in its native environment is a richly rewarding activity for the young and old. A few tips will help you see and enjoy Refuge wildlife.

### *Coyote pups*



*Photo: Bill Stormont, FWS*

Early morning and late evening is when wildlife is most active and easiest to spot, especially in the heat of the summer.

Your car makes an excellent observation blind. Many types of wildlife can be approached more closely in a car than on foot. Because road access is very limited on the refuge, hiking into more remote areas may provide excellent opportunities to view animals, take-in the beautiful scenery, and experience the solitude and wildness of the refuge. Hike quietly to improve your odds of wildlife encounters.

Binoculars or spotting scopes are very important for viewing wildlife across the great expanses of Refuge habitat.

### *Sandhill cranes*

*Photo: R. Blacker, FWS*





Photo: R. Blacker, FWS



*American white pelicans*

Waterfowl may use refuge lakes in wet years. Nesting geese and Sandhill cranes can occasionally be seen at Paiute Reservoir. The Warner Wetlands, at the base of Hart Mountain is a mecca for migratory waterfowl. Blinds have been built at Hart Bar.



*Pronghorn*

Pronghorn may be seen throughout the rolling sagebrush habitat on the eastern half of the Refuge. The Frenchglen Road and Lookout Point on the Blue Sky Road are the best places to spot pronghorn.

Photo: J. Webb, FWS



*Bighorn sheep*

Bighorn sheep can be seen year-round from the base of Hart Mountain. Stop at the bighorn sheep sign near the CCC camp or any other location along the road and scan with binoculars for herds of sheep. You are unlikely to see the sheep with a naked eye.

Photo: R. Blacker, FWS



*Mule deer*

Mule deer frequent the juniper and aspen stands found in the Intermediate Hills and the higher elevations of the refuge. Walk or drive the Skyline trail (open seasonally to 4WD vehicles) for the best viewing opportunities.



*Avocet*

Over 200 resident and migratory birds species use the refuge. Riparian areas, such as the Hotsprings Campground, are especially good areas for birding. Blue Sky supports a wealth of birds that are attracted to this isolated stand of ponderosa pine.



*Sage grouse*

Sage grouse gather around meadows in the areas between refuge headquarters and the top of the mountain. We suggest an early evening walk along any meadow edge or a drive along the Skyline trail at sunset.

## Managing & Restoring Wildlife Habitat



To wildlife, habitat is home: a place to eat, rest, and raise young. With steep rocky cliffs, rolling hills with bitterbrush and mahogany, aspen groves along narrow streams, and wide open expanses of sagebrush grasslands, Hart Mountain NAR habitat is as diverse as the wild things that call it home.

Providing high quality, diverse habitat for wildlife requires research, management and restoration.

Natural systems have been altered in many different ways. Through management, we strive to minimize or compensate for these changes. Native Community Restoration—restoring the condition under which native species at the Refuge evolved—is the theme of Hart Mountain NAR habitat management.

Fire is the primary management tool used to revitalize wildlife habitat. While burned areas may look devastated immediately after a fire, grasses and many flowering plants quickly recover as the habitat is reborn. Fire is an essential part of the Refuge ecosystem—it creates biological diversity.

Historically the mountain was grazed by sheep and cattle. That practice continued until the early 1990s. Releasing habitat from the pressures of livestock grazing is an important component of current refuge restoration.





## Before There Was a Refuge



*Photo: Jack Richardson, FWS*

Hart Mountain's past is a story of change and adaptation, not only for the land itself but for the people who have lived here for over 10,000 years. The climate was once much cooler and moister, and people thrived on and near the refuge by gathering abundant roots, seeds, and berries and by hunting animals. Then drought cycles may have forced inhabitants to leave the mountain in search of homes with more reliable water, plant, and animal resources.

By historic times, the environment looked much as it does today and was used by the Kidütökadö band of the Northern Paiute. These people moved through Warner Valley into adjacent uplands at Hart Mountain in the spring and summer to gather plants and hunt. Historic accounts indicate they hunted bighorn sheep, pronghorn, and deer. They gathered grass seeds and roots on the rocky flats of the mountain and wild plums and berries along creeks.

Archaeological sites on the Refuge reflect a long history of human use. Circles of rocks up to 10 feet in diameter remain from house foundations at summer base camps. Occupants of such camps traveled from these central locations to collect plants and hunt before returning to their winter villages at lower elevations.

Hunting blinds along canyon rims and other stacked rock features attest to a wide range of hunting activities which occurred over time on the mountain. Scatters of obsidian flakes from tool manufacturing are evidence of hunting camps and plant collection areas.



*Petroglyphs  
can be found  
throughout the  
refuge.*

The early inhabitants of the mountain also left artistic images for us to enjoy. Petroglyphs (images pecked into stone) can be found on rimrocks and outcrops throughout the Refuge. Ranging from abstract or geometric designs to representations of animals and humans, these images have many interpretations. Are they associated with hunting activities? Are they symbols of contacts with the spirit world? Do they represent the abundance of plants and animals available in an area, or ancient graffiti? No one knows for sure.

## Refuge Recreation

*Wildlife-dependent recreation is a priority at National Wildlife Refuges*

At Hart Mountain NAR, public uses are managed to protect wildlife and maintain the rugged, remote, and undeveloped character of the Refuge. A wide variety of opportunities are available for visitors to experience and explore. Please be safe, remember the consumption of, or possession of open container(s) of alcohol in a vehicle is prohibited on the refuge.



**Camping** is permitted year-round at Hotsprings Campground. You're welcome to stay up to 14 days. Winter snows may close the campground road periodically. Other camping areas may open during specially designated times. All camps are primitive, with pit toilets and no potable water.



**Campfires** may be enjoyed only at Hotsprings Campground. Bring your own firewood, because wood may not be collected on the refuge. Always check for campfire restrictions posted at Refuge headquarters or in the campground.



**Wildlife Observation & Photography** are the most popular recreational activities on the refuge (see Wildlife Viewing section for more information).



**Hiking** is encouraged throughout the refuge. No designated trails are maintained. The open terrain of the refuge provides ample cross-country hiking options. Game trails may be followed in many of the canyons. Please exercise caution when entering rocky and rugged terrain.

**Overnight Backpacking** is a great way to experience some of the more remote parts of the refuge. Obtain a self-issued permit at refuge headquarters before you depart. Check for current regulations when filling out your permit.



**Biking** is an enjoyable way to see many parts of the refuge. Bicycles may only be used on roads open to motorized vehicles. Even the best roads are rough and rocky, so sturdy, mountain bikes are a must.



**Horses** may be ridden throughout the Refuge. Overnight use is allowed at Post Meadows camping area where corrals are available, call ahead for availability. Stock water in the creek is about 100 yards away. Pelletized feed is required to avoid introducing weeds with hay.



**Fishing** is allowed in Rock and Guano Creeks and at Warner Pond in accordance with Oregon state regulations. An Oregon fishing license is required. Please check current regulations for seasons, limits, and other guidelines.



**Hunting** is permitted in accordance with state and federal regulations. A very limited number of tags are offered for deer, pronghorn, and bighorn sheep hunts in the late summer and fall. Chukar may be hunted in limited areas on the Refuge. No hunting is allowed within three miles of Refuge headquarters.



**Weapons** possessed for purposes other than legal hunting activities must be unloaded and dismantled or cased.



**Artifacts** must be enjoyed in place. Collecting, possessing or damaging arrowheads, petroglyphs, or any form of artifact is strictly prohibited.

## Keep in Mind

The high desert is a beautiful and harsh environment where conditions can be extreme. Please take the time to be well prepared before visiting the refuge. During the summer, plenty of drinking water, sun screen, insect repellent, and first aid supplies should be kept on hand. Nighttime temperatures which dip below freezing can be experienced any time of year, so pack accordingly.

Most Refuge roads are not maintained for passenger vehicles. High clearance and four-wheel drive are needed to travel off the Frenchglen, Blue Sky, or Hotsprings roads. Small amounts of precipitation can make very muddy roads. During the winter and spring most roads are impassable due to snow or wet conditions. Please avoid driving on muddy roads for your own safety and the protection of fragile resources.

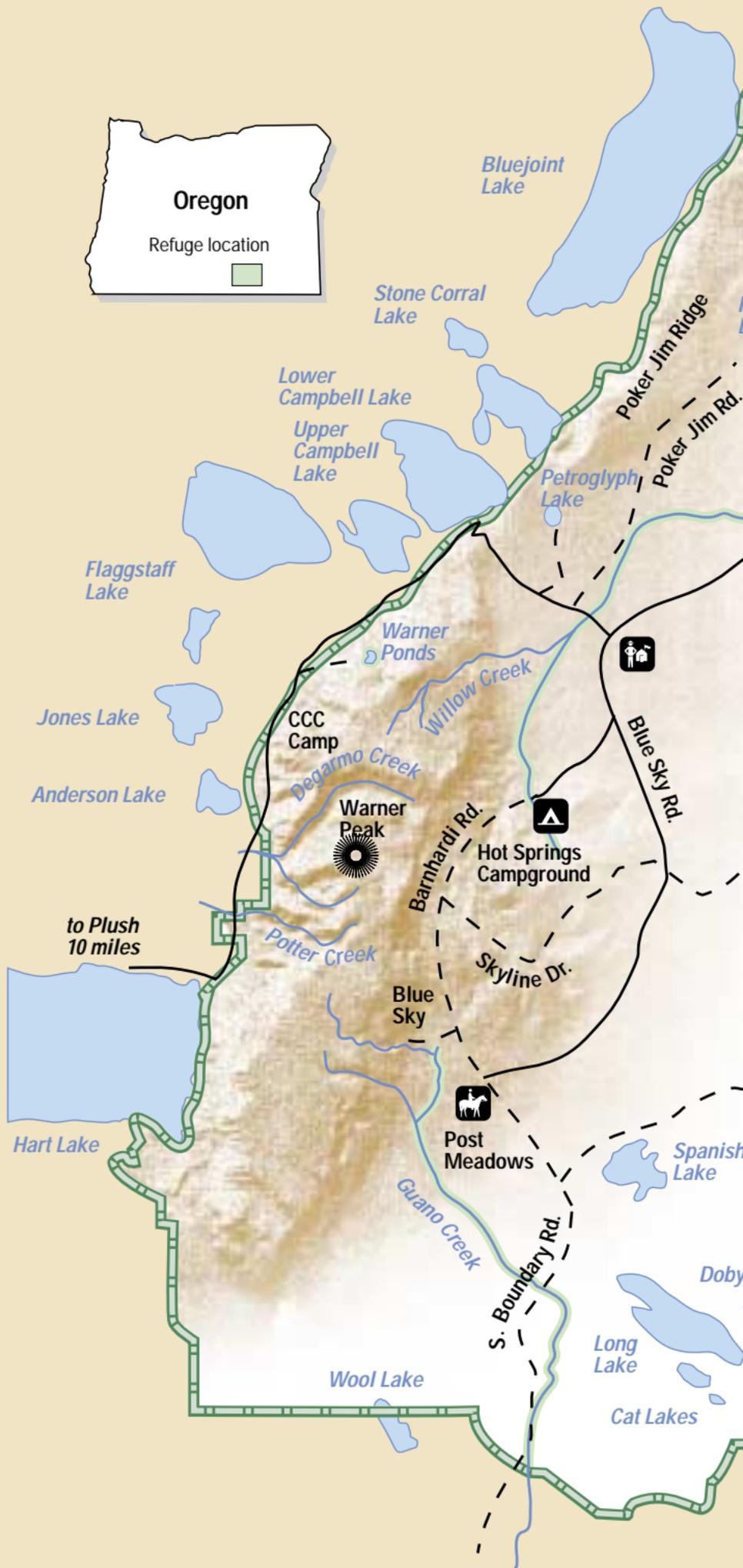


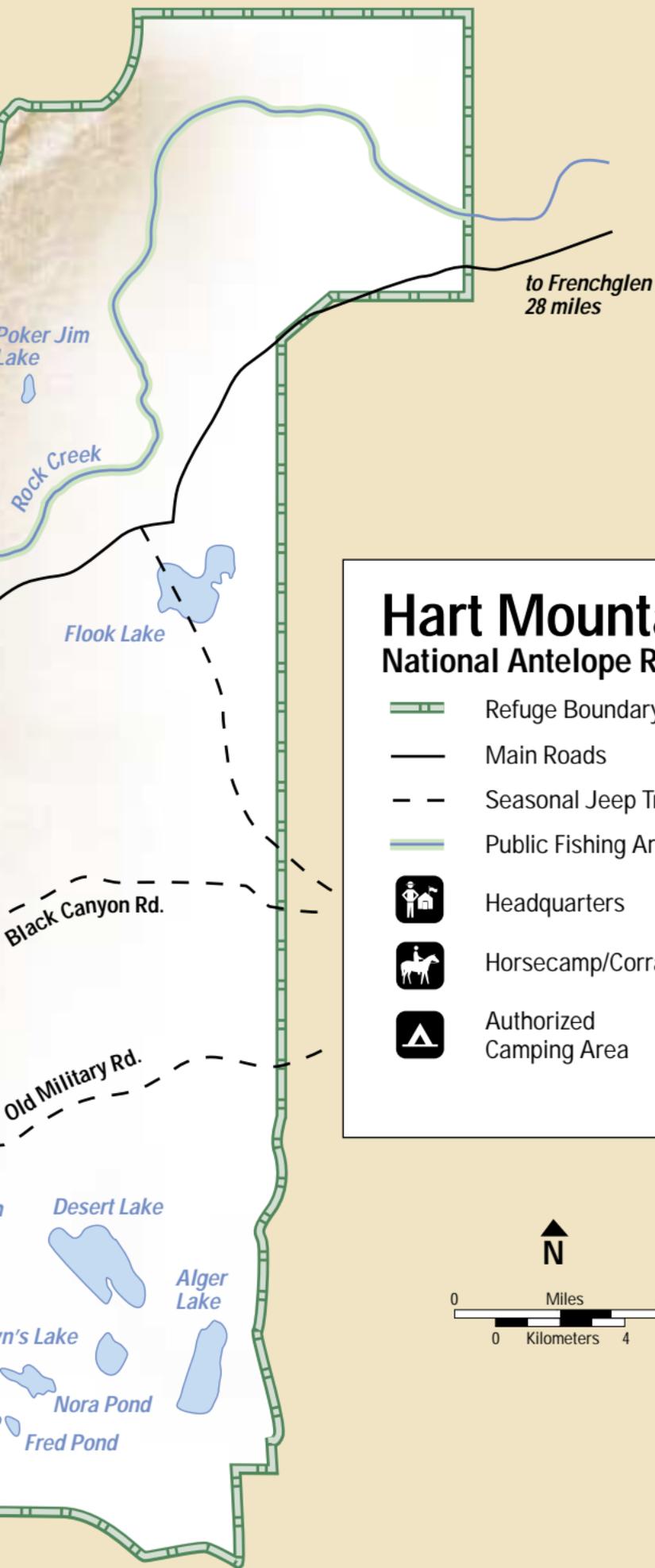
Gasoline and groceries are available in Plush (25 miles west) and Frenchglen (49 miles east). Lakeview (65 miles southwest) is the nearest full-service community with overnight lodging, auto repair, retail stores, and tourist information.

Emergency services and roadside assistance are not readily available on the refuge. The Refuge staff is not able to provide or sell gas, towing, or auto repair service.

Plan to pack out what you pack in. Garbage collection and septic dumping facilities are not provided on the refuge.

Drinking water, compressed air, and a payphone are available at Refuge Headquarters.





# Hart Mountain National Antelope Refuge

-  Refuge Boundary
-  Main Roads
-  Seasonal Jeep Trails
-  Public Fishing Area
-  Headquarters
-  Horsecamp/Corrals
-  Authorized Camping Area

Hart Mountain  
National Antelope Refuge  
P.O. Box 111  
Lakeview, OR 97630  
phone: 541/947-3315  
fax: 541/947-4414

Oregon Relay Service  
TTY 1 800/735 2900  
Voice 1 800/735 1232  
ASCI 1 800/735 0644  
SP 1 800/735 3896

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service  
on the internet at  
<http://www.fws.gov>

For National Wildlife Refuge  
information: 1 800/344 WILD

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*Photo: Bill Stormont, FWS*