



## Red Rock Canyon NCA Environmental Education Program

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### Fire Ecology Loop

**Location:** Within the Scenic Loop, just before mile 11 at Pine Creek Trailhead

**Length:**  $\frac{3}{4}$  miles round trip for loop only;  $1\frac{1}{4}$  miles round trip total

**Difficulty:** Easy-Moderate; 300 foot elevation gain

**Estimated Minimum Hike Time:** 50 minutes

**Facilities:** Two vault toilets at trailhead. No water available.

**General Description:**

This trail branches off the Pine Creek Canyon Trail. It is a short, figure eight trail that goes through a stand of Ponderosa Pine where a controlled burn took place.

**Background:**

Fire is an important and natural component to a healthy ecosystem. It provides open space for plants to grow, and some plants have evolved to need fire to release seeds. Unfortunately, fire has not always been well understood, and for most of the last century complete fire suppression was practiced throughout the country. This resulted in an over accumulation of undergrowth and brush in many locations, which provides excess fuel when fire does occur. As a consequence, surface burning fires that would clear undergrowth and leave most trees alive have become crown fires, destroying nearly everything they burn through.

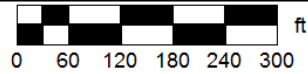
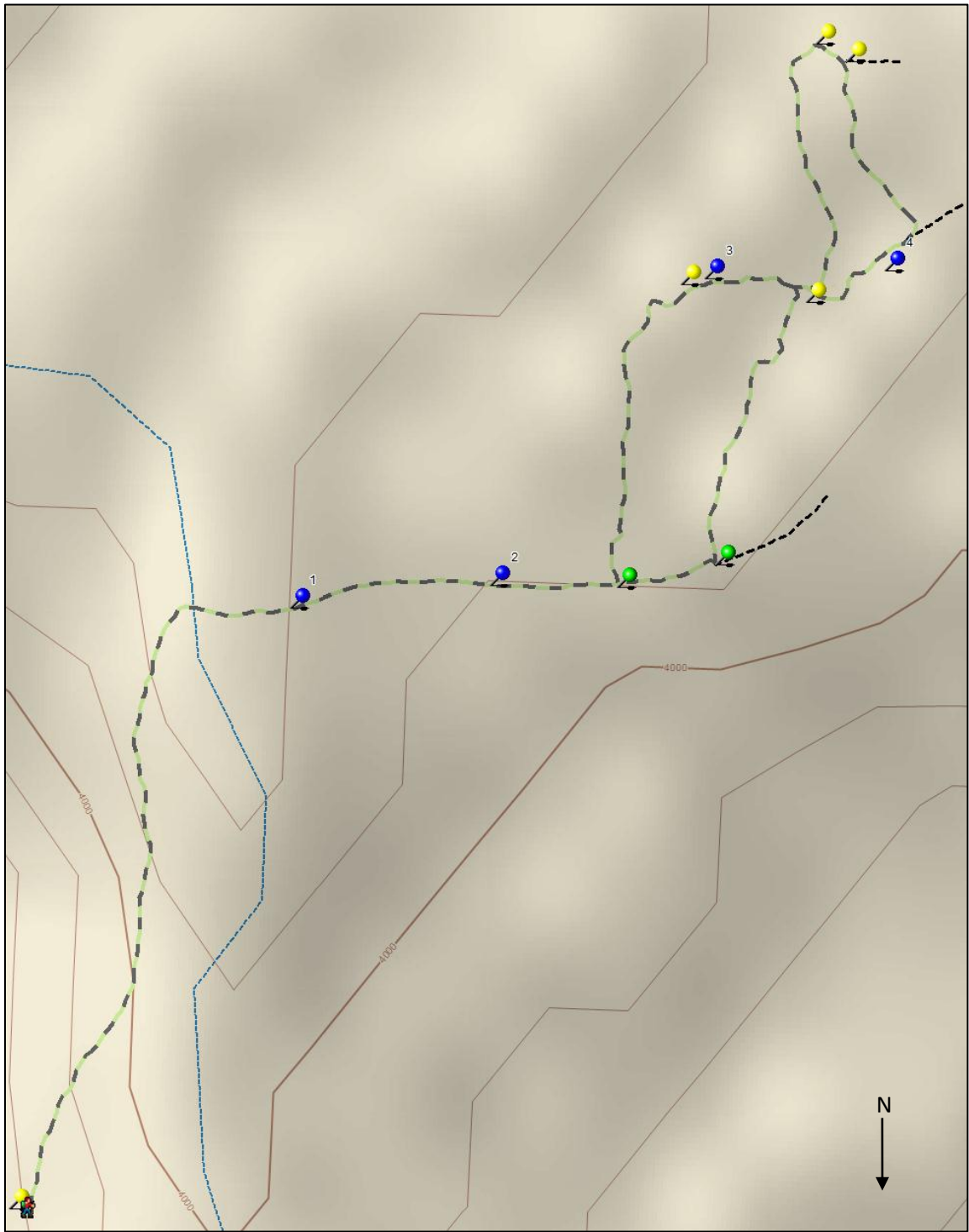
In the Fire Ecology Loop, Red Rock Canyon NCA is working to prevent such a disaster from destroying the relatively rare stands of ponderosa pine along Pine Creek. In May of 1992, a prescribed burn was performed in the area. A prescribed burn is a planned and controlled intentionally set fire designed to mimic low intensity natural fires that used to occur regularly. In addition, Red Rock Canyon NCA is also performing vegetative manipulation, cutting and trimming the excess brush to keep potential future fires low enough to not damage the pines.







**About the Hike:**

This hike is a side loop that branches a quarter mile into the Pine Creek Trail. It can be done alone or as part of the full Pine Creek Trail hike. Please see Pine Creek Trail guide for more information on that portion of the trail.

The following trail map includes markers for suggested activity stop locations. It is not necessary to use any or all of these locations, and depending on the activities you choose you may only use a few. Please see each activity for which stops are suggested for that particular activity's location.

# Fire Ecology Loop Trail Map



<b>Legend</b>	
	Trail
	Other trails
	Trailhead
	Suggested Activity Stop Locations
	Trail Signs
	Wayside signs