Big Creek (U60)
Recommended Standard Operating Procedures
Produced by the Idaho Division of Aeronautics
Revision 14-01
Introduction

Welcome to Big Creek, one of Idaho’s premier backcountry airstrip destinations. Mountain flying in Idaho is one of general aviation’s most gratifying flight experiences. Idaho has nearly 100 backcountry airstrips that offer access to unequaled outdoor recreation such as camping, fishing and hiking.

At the same time, flying in the mountains of Idaho is a serious, challenging endeavor and the number of recent accidents attests to that fact. Safe backcountry flying requires rock-solid skills in slow flight, airspeed control, intimate knowledge of your aircraft performance and well-prescribed personal limitations. Most of all, safe backcountry flying requires the proper attitude, one that is safe, conservative and professional. A safe flight is a stress-free and enjoyable flight.

The procedures in this document are not a substitute for proper mountain flying training. Pilots interested in developing such skills will find excellent flight training resources on page 1 of this document.

These preferred operating procedures were collaboratively developed by the FAA, NTSB, local flight training providers and the Idaho Division of Aeronautics. Our goal is to set a standard for safe operating practices at the Big Creek Airport. These include proper planning, communications, traffic patterns and inflight decision-making. They are proven procedures based on safe operating practices that will ensure your Idaho flying experience is a safe and enjoyable one.

We look forward to your safe arrival at Big Creek Airport.

Mike Pape, Administrator
Idaho Division of Aeronautics
**REMARKS**

Recommend land RWY 19, depart RWY 01. Check aircraft performance for high density altitude. Runway may not be visible from all parts of traffic pattern. Steep enclosing terrain. Runway subject to ongoing rodent damage. No winter maintenance. Aircraft use sides of strip during ski operations. South end of RWY rough.
Preflight Planning

Big Creek (U60) is part of the vast network of Idaho backcountry airstrips. Careful reading and adherence to the procedures in this manual are essential to maintaining the safety at this particular backcountry airport. Flight planning should include:

- thorough aircraft maintenance status,
- familiarity with NOTAMs,
- backcountry operations,
- Idaho mountain flying tips,
- density altitude calculations,
- common courtesies,
- backcountry etiquette,
- weather en-route and during your stay,
- search and rescue procedures and
- survival gear.

Do not attempt operations at Big Creek without having a solid fundamental background in mountain flying. The Idaho Division of Aeronautics strongly recommends that visiting pilots obtain an airport checkout before landing at Big Creek Airport. The Idaho Aviation Association (IAA) now has a page where instructors list their services and specialties at:

www.idahoaviation.com/instructors.php

Route Planning

Arrivals

Landing Runway 19

It is recommended that you land runway 19, wind permitting. Make your initial arrival call on 122.9 at least 5 miles from Big Creek Airport. Announce your distance, direction and altitude from Big Creek Airport. Maintain 1,500’ above field elevation (AFE) as applicable or minimum (7250). Configure your airplane to canyon maneuvering speed. Begin a descent to a traffic pattern altitude of 800-1000’ AFE.

(Big Creek Airport) N45 07’99 W115 19’31

CAUTION

There could be numerous airplanes departing and arriving north of the airfield. Consistent position reports, traffic scans and use of landing lights are crucial upon descent and throughout the approach into Big Creek Airport.

You may encounter strong downdrafts on final.

If needed, circle to observe the airfield for obstacles and hazards such as airplanes, animals, vehicles, pedestrians and sprinklers. Conduct a standard left-hand pattern that includes an upwind, crosswind, downwind, base and final.

Landing Runway 01

NOTE

Landing downstream to the north is NOT recommended. Landings to the north should only be considered when wind or weather dictates that landing to the south would be unsafe.
CAUTION

USFS Heliport Ops adjacent to the SW end of the airport. Activity is greatest during summer months.

WARNING

By not joining the pattern, there is increased risk of a midair collision. Your radio calls could be masked by terrain. You may not see airplanes, animals, vehicles, pedestrians or sprinklers on the runway until established on final.

Landing Abort Procedures

Runway 19 and 01

At your predetermined abort altitude, typically 200-300’ AFE, begin your abort and follow the desired abort path (see map). Pick an altitude that will provide a safe abort procedure. Abort altitudes may vary for every type of aircraft and situation. 200-300’ AFE is a good altitude for most aircraft.

NOTE

You must abort the landing early if you cannot land on-speed, on aim-point, and within the first 1/3 of the runway. Early recognition to abort is paramount and requires instinctive action by the pilot.

Straight in Landing

Straight in landings to Runway 19 or 01 are strongly discouraged.
**Departures**

*NOTE*

Declaring intentions, scanning for traffic and use of landing lights are encouraged for departures. Make your initial radio call on 122.9 prior to taxiing. Landing traffic always have the right of way.

**Departing Runway 01**

North Departure-Example: “Big Creek traffic, Cessna 20836 departing runway 01 climbing northeast bound”.

*NOTE*

Consider extending your departure leg towards Smith Creek before making your turn to the south (see map). Doing so might provide better altitude separation between you and downwind traffic.

**Departing Runway 19 is Strongly Discouraged**

*Why?*

1. Your takeoff path is directly toward rising terrain.
2. You may encounter strong downdrafts.
3. High density altitude conditions have contributed to accidents at Big Creek.

*CAUTION*

Rising terrain to the east will restrict your view of aircraft on the downwind and base legs.

You may encounter strong downdrafts.

Southerly winds prevail mid-morning through the afternoon. Aircraft should remain on the ground until more favorable conditions exist.
SAFETY ALERT

Arrivals

Be alert for high-density traffic en-route to Big Creek Airport during fly-ins.

Runway is not visible from all parts of the traffic pattern.

First 1000’ of runway 19 could be wet and soft (see map).

Runway and tie down area subject to ongoing rodent damage. Be alert for large rodent holes.

Runway 19: Prior to making your base to final turn, be sure to scan the final for any straight-in traffic. Straight-in traffic procedures are strongly discouraged.

- Make inbound calls at least 5 miles out. State your intentions on backcountry frequency 122.9. Keep communications brief and concise. Refer to the VFR Route Planning section of this guide.

Example: “Big Creek traffic, Cessna 20836 is 5 miles north of Big Creek airport inbound at 7500. We will enter an upwind for landing runway 19 Big Creek”, etc.

- If your landing appears unsafe because of altitude, spacing, speed of preceding aircraft, or any other reason, abort your landing and initiate a go around above 200’ AFE.

- Common Errors: excessive speed and/or altitude, landing long and late go-around.

- Formation arrivals are highly discouraged.

SAFETY ALERT

Departures

Steep enclosed terrain may mask your view of traffic landing runway 19.

Landing traffic may only be visible when established on final.

Last 1000’ of runway 01 could be wet and soft (see map).

Runway and tie down area subject to ongoing rodent damage. Be alert for large rodent holes.

- Make a radio call on 122.9 prior to taxiing.

Example: “Big Creek traffic Cessna 20836 is taxiing for runway 01 northeast departure Big Creek.”

- Formation departures are highly discouraged.
Big Creek Airport Notes

- Safety is priority Number One!
- You are always responsible for your safety and the safety of those in your group.
- Mishaps, incidents, or accidents must be reported to the Valley Co. Sheriff’s dispatch at (208) 382-5160, and the Boise FAA Flight Standards Office at (208) 387-4000.
- Be familiar with high density altitude operations.
- Use of landing lights while in the pattern is recommended.
- Keep radio communications brief and concise. No excessive chatter.
- Landing traffic should clear the runway and expedite to parking.
- Tie downs are frequently obscured by tall grass. Be alert for deep rodent holes in this vicinity.
- Consider remaining in parking until aircraft on final has landed.
- Pilot training is discouraged at Big Creek Airport during organized fly-ins.
- Aerobatic maneuvers, formation flying, and low passes are all highly discouraged over Big Creek Airport.
- Fuel is not available at Big Creek Airport.
- Non-radio equipped aircraft are not recommended during Big Creek Airport fly-ins.
- Wi-Fi service available adjacent the old general store.
- Webcams facing north/south are accessible at www.idahoaviation.com/webcams.php
- During the spring and summer months, sprinklers are active throughout the day.
- Camping located SE side adjacent runway.
- Big Creek USFS Ranger Station open spring and summer from 7:30am-12 midnight.

Please – Add these items to your checklist!

1. Check your ELT on 121.5 after every landing and monitor 121.5 when able during flight.
2. Close your flight plan with the appropriate FAA facility.

Remember: 121.5 ELTs are no longer monitored by satellites. Relying on a 121.5 ELT alone could delay an aerial search by hours—even days! Consider purchasing a 406 ELT, Personal Locator Beacon (PLB) or SPOT. The search process begins within minutes!

Common Courtesy

- Be considerate of other wilderness users. Fly quiet.
- Minimize practice landings and takeoffs.

Important Phone Numbers

Idaho Division of Aeronautics 208-334-8775
Lockheed Martin Flight Serv. 800-992-7433
Big Creek Ranger Station 208-634-2784
Valley County Police Dispatch 208-382-5160
Arnold Aviation 208-382-4844 for help relaying emergency info

Download the latest version of this SOP at: www.itd.idaho.gov/aero

Click on:
- Publications,
- Airport Operating Procedures
First 1000 ft of north end may be soft and wet.
IDAHO DIVISION OF AERONAUTICS
(Recommended Airstrip Operating Procedure)

Legend

Big Creek Airport Abort Path

Abort Path

Airport Elevation 5743 ft

Nautical Miles
Idaho Division of Aeronautics

3483 Rickenbacker St.
Boise, ID 83705
208-334-8775
Fax: 208-334-8789