

## Lion Canyon - Oak Creek Grade

**Direction to trailhead:** Take 9<sup>th</sup> Street south to traffic circle. Take 1<sup>st</sup> exit (west) onto Elm street, then to Oak Creek Grade on left (south). Drive south on Oak Creek Grade for approximately 11.6 miles to Oak Creek campground entrance on left. Drive down the entrance road for ½ mile to parking area and trail head. About 14.67 miles one way.

**Length of hike:** 5.45 miles (round trip)

**Beginning elevation:** 7798 feet

**Elevation change:** 1,426 feet

**Difficulty:** Moderate

**Description:** The hike starts on the east side of the campground (Figure 1) where it climbs steeply as it parallels a small creek. It is littered with small rocks so care needs to be taken to prevent tripping or stubbing a toe. The trail passes through a narrow, heavily forested canyon (Figure 2) for most of the way. Tall aspen, Douglas fir and white fir are the dominant trees with some ponderosa pine also. Scrub oaks, small cherry trees (pin cherries?), dogwoods, prostrate junipers, wild roses, gooseberries and mountain maples are frequently seen along the trail as well. Wild flowers depending on the season such as deep blue larkspur, geraniums, yellow senecio, yarrow and harebells add color to the trail. Near the top, the canyon widens allowing sunlight to penetrate the forest making it much more cheerful and bright (Figure 3). At the top, the trail leaves the forest and enters a very large meadow, Locke Park, with scattered pine trees. The views from here are magnificent including the Sangre de Cristo Mountains. This is a great location to have a picnic before heading back down the trail to the trail head and parking lot.

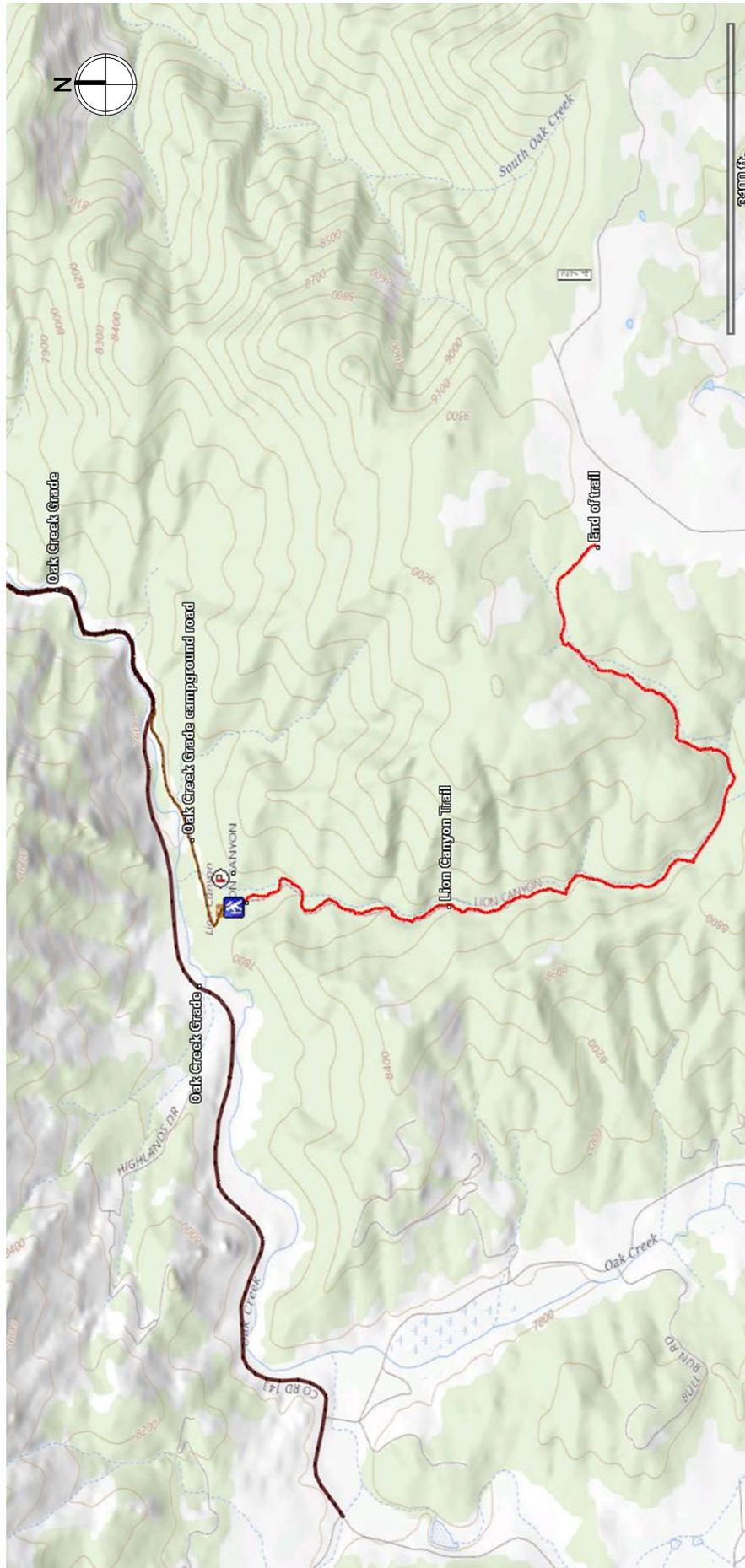


Figure 1. Map of Lion Creek Trail



Figure 2. Lion Canyon trail



Figure 3. View of the cloud enshrouded Sangre de Cristo Mountains from Locke Park