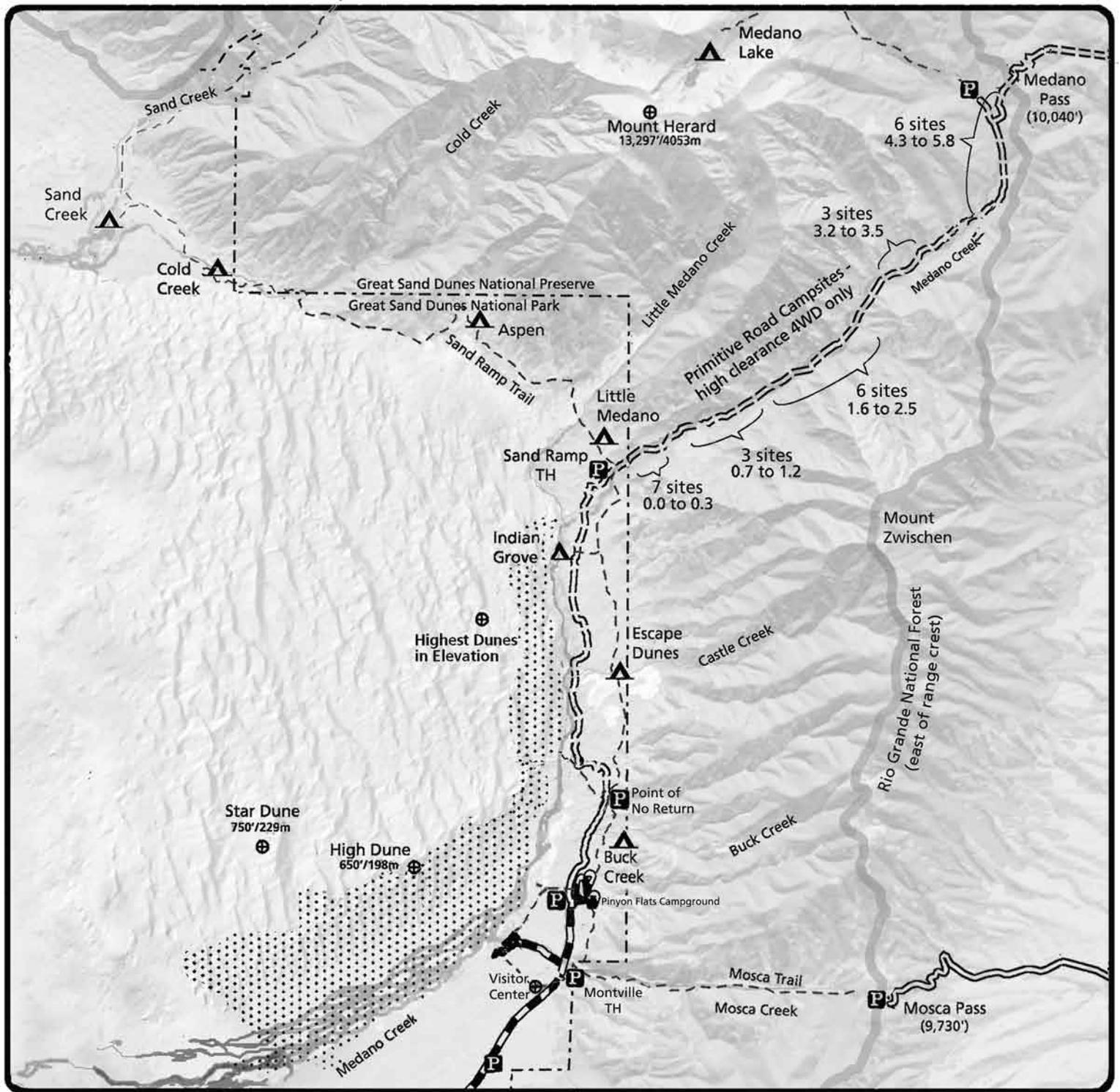


# Great Sand Dunes

## Backcountry Campsites

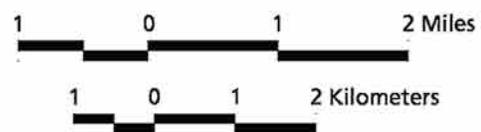
National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

Great Sand Dunes  
National Park and Preserve



### Legend

- |                                         |                         |
|-----------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Backcountry Campsite                    | Stream                  |
| Hiking Trail                            | High Clearance 4wd Road |
| Day use zone                            | Paved Road              |
| Overnight backpacking parking by permit | Dirt Road               |



Updated 2014

### Designated Backpacking Sites Along Sand Ramp Trail

**Buck Creek** 0.5 miles north of Loop 2 in the campground. Trees nearby. This short hike is ideal for families with young children. Intermittent water in Buck Creek.

**Escape Dunes** 1.5 miles north of Point of No Return in an open grove of ponderosa pines near small “escape dunes”. Intermittent water in Castle Creek in late spring only.

**Indian Grove** 3 miles north of Point of No Return, in a grove of ponderosa pines and cottonwoods. The most popular backpacking site outside the dunefield; adjacent to the dunes and Medano Creek, but in a sheltered grove of trees. Composting toilet at site. Fairly reliable water in Medano Creek.

**Little Medano** 4 miles from Point of No Return, or 0.7 miles from Sand Ramp TH (high-clearance 4WD parking only). This site is situated in a grove of ponderosa pines below Mount Herard. Intermittent water in Little Medano Creek.

**Aspen** 5.7 miles from Point of No Return, or 2.3 miles from Sand Ramp TH (high-clearance 4WD parking only). Great views of the entire dunefield from a foothills aspen grove. Closest water is Medano Creek, 2.3 miles.

**Cold Creek** Grueling 9 miles from Point of No Return, or 5.5 miles from Sand Ramp TH. Cold Creek Camp lies in a rugged valley filled with ponderosa pines. Cold Creek is intermittent; Sand Creek is 1.5 miles away.

**Sand Creek** Grueling 10.5 miles from Point of No Return or 7 miles from Sand Ramp TH. In a grove of trees on the far side of the dunefield. This is the only national park backpacking site where campfires are permitted. Sand Creek has fairly reliable water.

## Camping in the Dunes

The most popular backpacking option - when night skies are calm and clear - is an overnight stay in the Great Sand Dunes. Check the forecast at the Visitor Center to see if wind and/or lightning are forecast during your visit.

With a free permit from the Visitor Center, you may camp anywhere on the main dunefield outside of the day use zone (gray shaded area on maps). Minimum hike to get beyond the day use area is 1.5 miles one way.

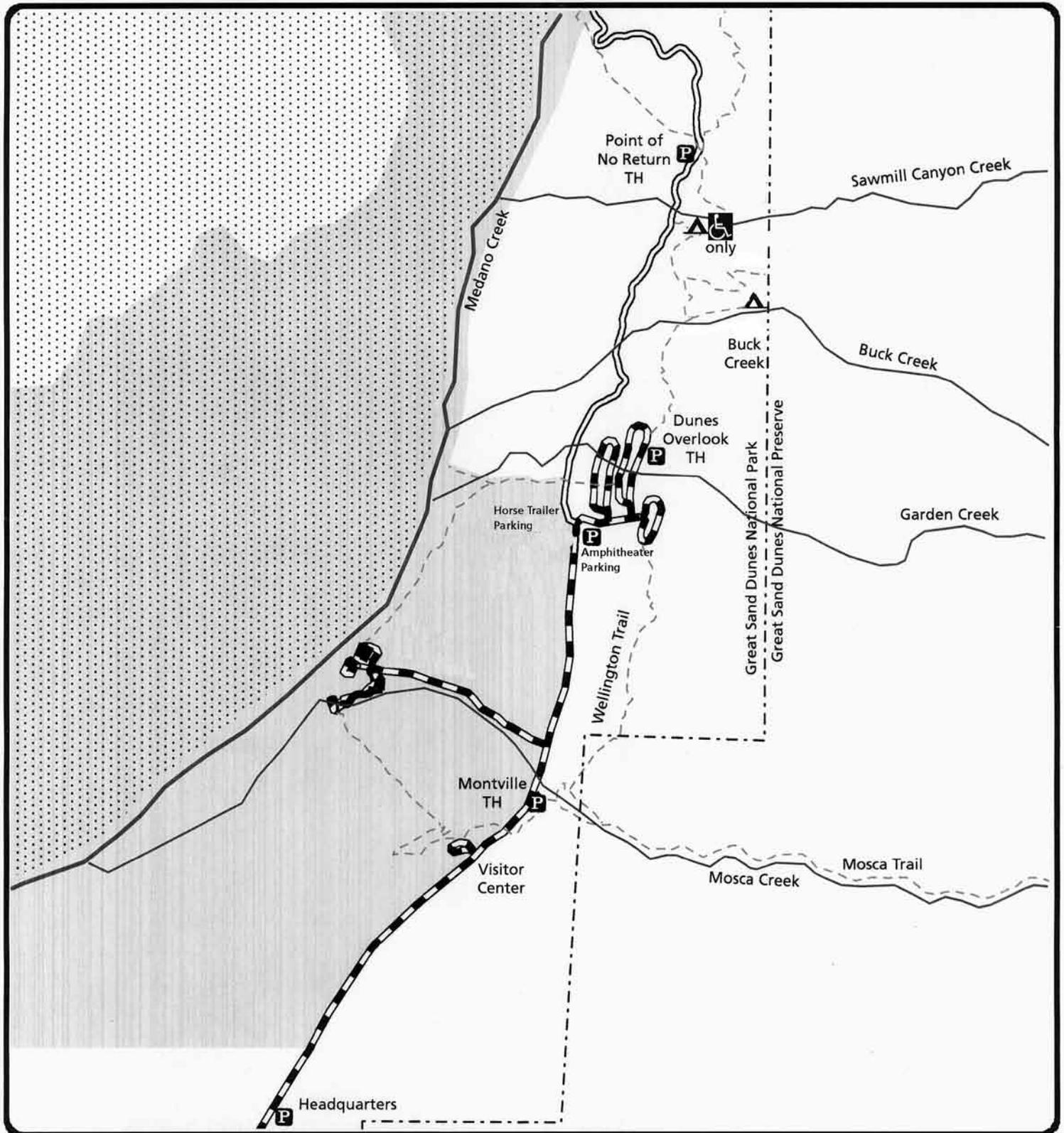
Carry adequate water and pack out all trash. In this environment only, bury human waste 1" below the surface; sun and wind will destroy it quickly. Pack out your toilet paper. Surface sand temperatures may reach 140° F. on sunny summer afternoons. Take and wear shoes or boots which will protect your feet. If lightning threatens, leave the dunes if possible. Crouch low on top of your backpack if in imminent danger.

## Camping in Great Sand Dunes National Preserve

This mountainous area is the watershed of the Great Sand Dunes' geological system. The national preserve includes six peaks over 13,000' elevation, alpine tundra and lakes, and ancient forests. Backpackers usually access the preserve via Mosca Pass, Medano Lake, or Music Pass trailheads. Check with a ranger for details, current conditions, and a free permit before travel.

## Backcountry Parking

This map shows available locations marked with **P** for overnight parking while accessing the backcountry.



### Legend

- |  |                            |  |            |
|--|----------------------------|--|------------|
|  | Backcountry Campsite       |  | Dunefield  |
|  | Hiking Trail               |  | Stream     |
|  | Backcountry access parking |  | Paved Road |
|  | Day use zone               |  | Dirt Road  |

0.2 0 0.2 0.4 0.6 Miles



0.2 0 0.2 0.4 0.6 Kilometers



Overnight parking by permit only

Updated 2014