



## MONTANA - IDAHO - WYOMING

DATE VISITED: July 29, 1997

**ACCESS ROUTE:** This is a difficult location to reach. Park and National Forest Service Rangers and particularly Professional Surveyor Paul Scherbel and Forest Service Surveyor Jon Leonard, provided helpful information on the terrain and accessibility of this tri-point. Mr. Scherbel spearheaded a successful effort to accurately locate and restore all eight Wyoming corners. This includes six tri-State corners plus the NW and SW corners which are not tri-points. Scherbel and Leonard were at the MT-ID-WY tripoint on August 20, 1995 with a group of about 30 people. They had a difficult time finding the corner marker, but after locating it, they erected a rock cairn beside the marker post and put yellow metal Bearing Tree signs on a circle of trees around the corner (see p 39). They also set up a 12 channel Trimble Pro XL GPS receiver and collected data which was differentially corrected using input from base stations in Butte, MT and Jackson, WY, to obtain geographic coordinates estimated to be accurate to one meter. As reported by Jerry Messick, these coordinates, based on NAD83 Map Datum, are N 44° 28' 32.27", W 111° 03' 08.62". Elevation at the tri-point is approximately 8330 feet.

The 1874 survey of the ID - WY meridian boundary set a marker post at the assumed crest of the Continental Divide. A 1906 survey found the 1874 mark 6 miles too far north and replaced it with the marker at the present location.

This area was in the North Fork fire area, one of many parts of Yellowstone Park and the surrounding National Forest which burned in the devastating fires during the summer of 1988. The North Fork fire was very intense and destroyed the soil, so there are large areas with little regeneration yet, except for scattered patches of wild flowers, grasses along the stream, a few new trees and occasional trees which survived the fires. Travel is very difficult because of the large number of downed, partially burned trees criss-crossed on the ground.

From West Yellowstone, go W and S on US20 to Island Park Ranger Station. Check with the rangers for changes in the route and location of gates on the access road. Because of many road closures, the only possible route is via Forest Road 066. From Macks Inn on US 20, 6 miles N of the Ranger Station, go E 4.8 miles to Big Springs. At 0.9 mile beyond the Big Springs bridge turn R on FR 066. Proceed on 066 for 12¾ miles to a locked gate. Park and continue on foot for 3.8 miles to where the road crosses Thirsty Creek on a sharp bend in the road. At this point the coordinates are N 44° 28.3', W 111° 06.0' at elevation about 7860 feet. Note that closure of another gate 2.5 miles farther NW may be implemented later in 1997, thus involving a hike of 6.3 miles to the Thirsty Creek crossing. Bicycles are allowed but no motorized vehicles.

The route Clark Hall and I took from 066 was up Thirsty Creek on its N side to the fourth drainage coming in on that side. Normally Thirsty is dry by mid summer, but in 1997 it had a lot of water in it. However, all the side drainages were dry. Hike up the fourth drainage to the plateau above. Then proceed at approx. 80° True to the marker. While this may be done by compass, it is much easier with a GPS navigation unit. Just be sure you know how to use your GPS and have extra batteries so your unit won't go dead before you get back out to the road. Distance from 066 to the tri-point according to the GPS (straight line) is 2.37 miles, but actual hiking distance is probably closer to 4 miles. No permit is needed for day trips but is required for overnight camping in the National Park. Take plenty of water since above Thirsty Creek there is little water.