



# Bourland Trestle: Gateway To Timber

ROG 16-51-08 2/2020



*Bourland Trestle 1970: photo courtesy of J. B. Lowe*



*Bourland Trestle today: photo courtesy of Erin Potter*

The Bourland Trestle is a well known, narrow gauge logging railroad trestle in the Stanislaus National Forest. Trestles were vital links in the railroad logging chain. If trestles were damaged or destroyed, logging and sawmill operations would come to a standstill until repairs were made. The remains are a visible reminder of an historic period when lumber was king and the railroad was a vital queen, needed to bring lumber to the sawmills after harvest.

The trestle was part of the Westside Lumber Company system, operating between 1900 and 1960. Westside rails eventually reached 70 miles of mainline track and 250 miles of branch lines, spur grades and sidings. Built about 1922, Bourland Trestle was located 43 miles from the mill in the town of Tuolumne. The trestle was 315 feet long and 76 feet high. Fire danger was so great for these large timber trestles that the railroad kept a watchman at all major bridges to watch passing trains and check for flying sparks.

Gradually, the need for railroads to transport timber gave way to more modern methods,

principally truck transport from harvest site to mill. As trucks took over, the railroads were removed and the trestles were abandoned.

Today, the Bourland Trestle is the centerpiece of a "rails-to-trails" experience, running about 65 miles from the town of Tuolumne to Cherry Valley. The first two legs - from Mira Monte outside Tuolumne to River Ranch Campground and from Hull Creek to the Clavey River - have been completed.

Proposed long-term goals for the Bourland Trestle include full or partial restoration of the trestle as a safe pedestrian bridge while retaining its historic flavor and character. The trestle was partially stabilized in 1995 but was damaged again in 1997 by flooding.

Do not remove railroad artifacts and remnants; leave them so that others may relive the past. Excavating, removing or otherwise damaging a heritage resource is a crime. Anyone caught doing so may be imprisoned and receive a substantial fine. Help protect these fragile and irreplaceable reminders of the past for future generations. If you discover anyone digging, metal detecting, removing or damaging any heritage resource, please contact the Forest Supervisor's office at (209) 532-3671.



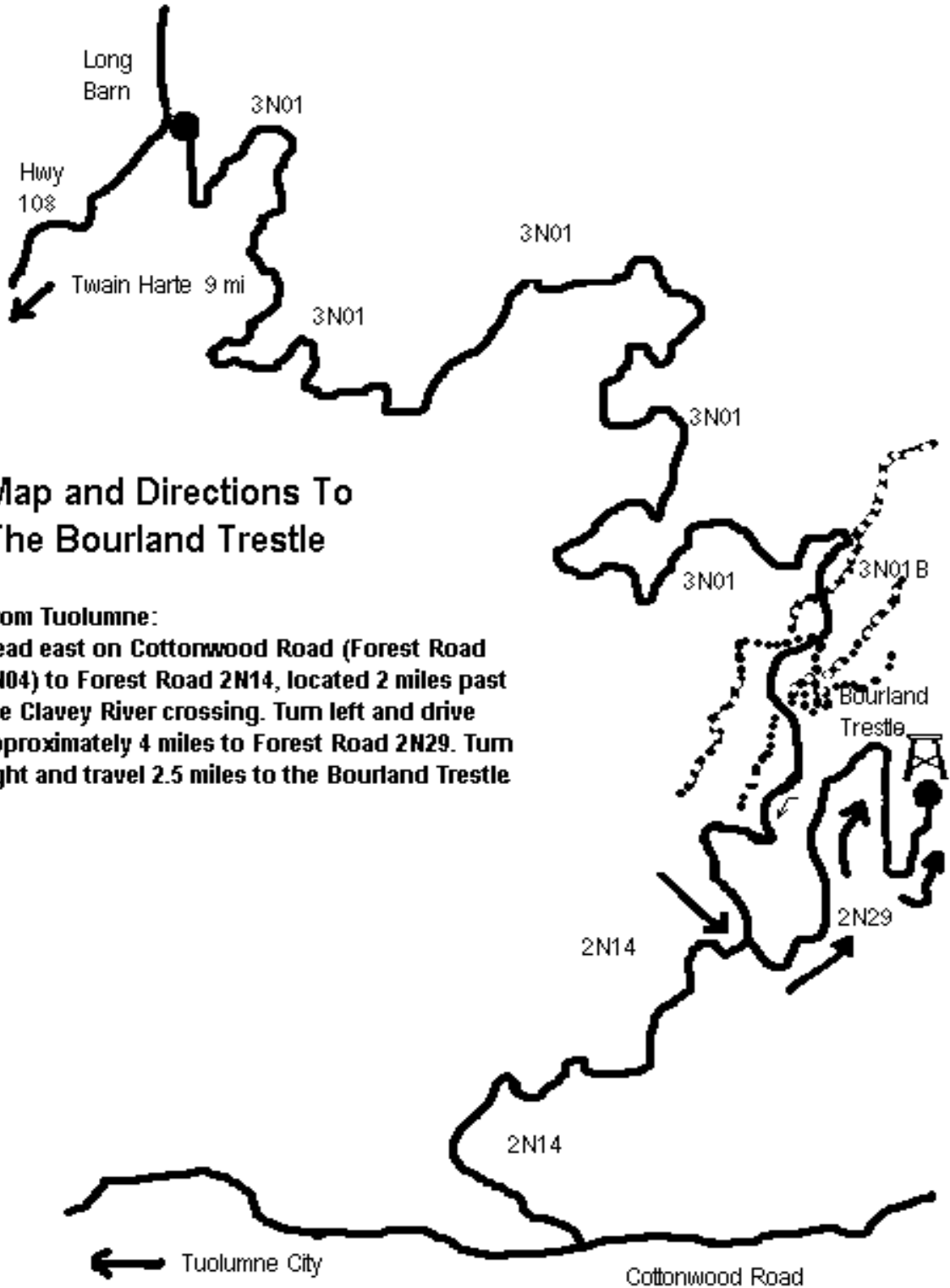
*At Bourland, a cabinman's cabin stood beside the trestle until it burned in the early 1980s. Photo courtesy of J.B.Lowe*

For more information and reading material on the railroads that ran through the Stanislaus, contact us:

**Forest Supervisor's Office**  
19777 Greenley Road  
Sonora, CA 95370  
(209) 532-3671

Interested in helping to restore Bourland Trestle? Let us know!





### Map and Directions To The Bourland Trestle

**From Tuolumne:**  
Head east on Cottonwood Road (Forest Road 1N04) to Forest Road 2N14, located 2 miles past the Clavey River crossing. Turn left and drive approximately 4 miles to Forest Road 2N29. Turn right and travel 2.5 miles to the Bourland Trestle