

## **Black Hill Regional Park, Little Seneca Lake**

Little Seneca Lake, in Black Hill Regional Park, is a reservoir created after a previous drought struck the Washington area. The park is under Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (MNCPPC) management and the 500 acre lake covers almost one-third of it. Most known for its lake's boating fishing and birding opportunities, there are also paved and unpaved trails, picnic shelters, playgrounds and volleyball courts. All trails are open to hikers, horseback riders and mountain cyclists. Inside the park boundaries, are the sites of an old gold mine and Waters Mill. The gold mine is located near the park offices. It was used from the 1850's to the 1950's but didn't produce much gold. The mill dates from 1810 and is located just off the Black Mill Trail near Little Seneca Creek, just above the lake. Some suburbs are on the park's borders but most of the surrounding area is rural (This is changing). When I was visiting, a ranger warned of citing a black bear on the Field Crest Spur Trail—a highly unusual occurrence within the park. In recent times the area has gotten some publicity for being near the setting of the popular 1999 movie *The Blair Witch Project*. The park is open 5/1-10/31 6AM to sunset and 11/1-2/28 7AM to sunset. Camping is not allowed.

### **Getting There**

From the Capital Beltway (I-495), take I-270 headed west. About 14 miles from the beltway, take Exit 16, Ridge Rd. headed east. Turn left after 1 mile on Frederick Rd. (Rte. 355). Less than a mile later, turn left onto West Old Baltimore Rd. Cross under I-270 and turn left into the park on Lake Ridge Drive. Pay the nominal entree fee at the gate. Go down the hill passing the Visitor Center on the right, then pull-in to the parking area also on the right for the boat center. The trail head is at the very end of the parking area. Start in front of the restrooms and vending machines.

### **Area Routes**

#### Black Hill Trail (8.4 or 4.65 miles, IX or V)

Initially, this twisted figure eight shaped loop is paved and hilly. It climbs to park offices near the gold mine sight, then uses Lake Ridge Rd., the main road through the park. After turning right and going down an unpaved gravel road to cross the Little Seneca Creek, you pass the Waters Mill site and a flatter paved segment takes over. This paved section offers great views of the water and lies between the lake shore and the back yards of houses. A short option continues straight where the Black Hill Trail turns right to go around an inlet. Past that, the Black Hill Trail goes over the older Churchill Lake dam at Waters Landing Road. Churchill Lake sits just above Little Seneca Lake. It is private for the use of the residents of Waters Landing. A 1.5 mile paved trail loops around Churchill Lake and that trail also connects to some other spur trails.

Past the Churchill Lake dam, the Black Hill Trail goes on but does not completely loop Little Seneca Lake. The reason has to do with distance, houses and the fenced-in enclosure at the dam. Tentative plans may one day change this. To get back, from the end of the trail, as well as the short option turn-off, use suburban streets to loop counter-clockwise. The regular route thus makes a sort of concentric loop around Churchill Lake (that lake is not visible on the route).

Another spur trail returns you to Waters Mill. Use a switchback trail to climb the steep hill after crossing Little Seneca Creek. At the top, after crossing the gravel road you went out on, continue straight on what is the unpaved portion of the Black Hill Trail. Though generally downhill, there are some short steep climbs. After a segment on an AT&T cable route, bear left onto the paved Black Hill Trail. It circles the edge of Picnic Lane, passes through a fitness course, and returns you to the boat center parking lot.

#### Hard Rock/Field Crest Spur and Cabin Trails (6.55 or 5.1 miles, VI or V)

The terrain covered on this loop is varied. The paved Black Hill Trail makes an initial climb to Lake Ridge Drive. A couple of connecting trails bring you to the beginning of the Hard Rock Trail. It is blazed in blue with the white letters "HR," painted on top. The trail lives up to its name in the beginning but much of it is smooth wooded single track. It goes up and down a little but overall doesn't climb much. At its end, turn right on the Field Spur Trail, also appropriately found in a small succession forest field. Turn around at West Old Baltimore Rd. by getting onto Lake Ridge Dr. at the park entrance. Make the second left on a connector trail back to a different portion of the Field Crest Spur Trail. Afterward, bear right at all turns, until you return again to Lake Ridge Dr. and continue downhill by turning left. Turn right on the Cabin Branch Trail or proceed down the road past the entrance gate to shorten the route. The Cabin Branch Trail is actually a series of connected trails blazed in light blue with "CB" painted on top. Turn sharply left on the gentle downhill at the first opportunity and continue descending. Turn right at the next blazed trail. You'll almost reverse direction and cross a few hills and streams including one with a small suspension bridge, before hitting the telecommunications line clearing. Turn left at this "T" intersection, dip down to cross a creek again, then climb up to a good view of the lake. Use Black Hill Road to cross an inlet of the lake, then climb up to Lake Ridge Dr. The short option joins back here. Turn right on the drive, picking-up the paved Black Hill Trail shortly ahead on the right near the park offices and gold mine. It's mostly down hill back from there.

#### **Nearby and Connecting Zones**

Black Hill Regional Park, Ten Mile Creek  
Little Bennett Regional Park  
Seneca State Park, Schaeffer Farm

#### **What to do Afterward**

##### Food and Drink

picnic

Bob Evan's - 21044 Frederick Rd. - 301 515-6310

End Zone - 301-353-9039

El Amatillo - 301-588-7815

Stoltzfus Baked Goods - 301-916-3881

##### Entertainment and Edification

Boat and Canoe rentals

Montgomery County Fairgrounds - 301 963-3247

## Black Hill Trail

Distance: 8.4 or 4.65 miles

Rating: VIII or V; mostly paved trails and sidewalks with some dirt trails and steep hills

### 8.4 Mile Route

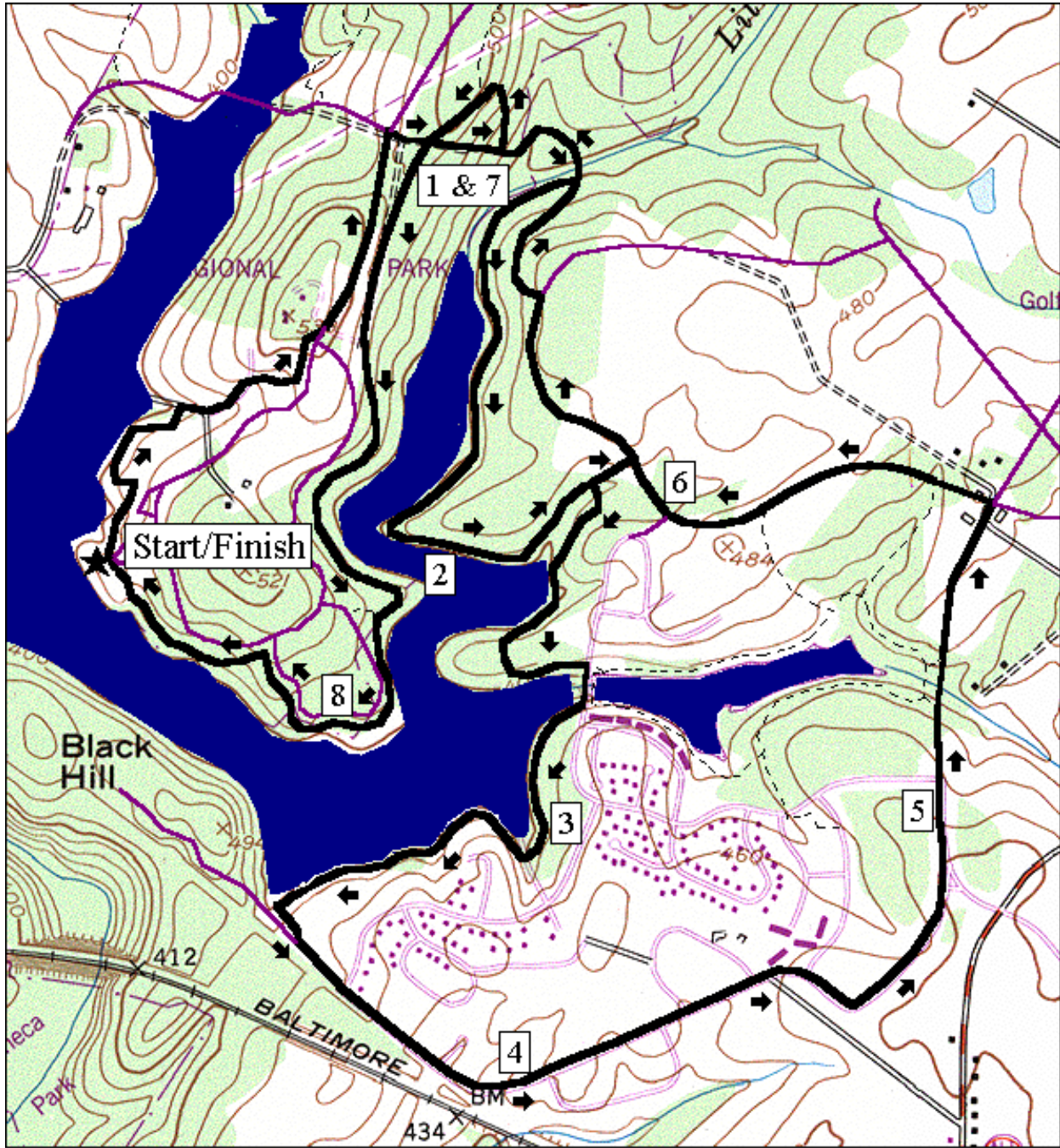
	5.15 S on dirt trail as paved trail goes down hill toward Lake Churchill
R 0.0 from the restroom/vending building	5.25 paved trail on L merges
L/R 0.15 trail X's before the Visitor Center; go behind the Visitor Center	L 5.45 Waters Landing Dr after dirt path along the road
R 0.4 at T; start climbing	5.55 trail X on L to Lake Churchill
R/L 0.6 at park office; onto Lake Ridge Rd	6.05 trail X on L from Little Seneca Lake and Black Hill Trail
R 0.9 gate; gravel Rd to Black Hill (BH) Trail on R at Black Hill Rd on L	>*
1.0 trail X; S is BH Trail (steep downhill on rough gravel)	L 6.4 Spinning Wheel Dr; go to the end
1.1 trail X on L before bridge over Little Seneca Creek	S 6.65 trail head to Black Hill Trail
R 1.2 at trail X to stay on BH Trail; S & R are paved; Waters Mill site	S 6.7 unpaved Black Hill Trail is S; paved Black Hill Trail is L; Waters Mill
<*	R 6.8 trail X on R after bridge over creek
R 2.25 at trail X on R to stay on BH Trail	6.9 trail X on R to Hard Rock Trail
R 2.7 dam at Water's Landing Rd to stay on BH Trail; S is to Lake Churchill	S 7.0 cross gravel road; S and L are Black Hill Trail (unpaved)
R 2.8 at trail X on R to stay on BH Trail	7.5 trail X
3.1 trail X on L to pumping station road	7.6 stream crossing
BL 3.5 leave the lake; Tr to R is dead end	BL 7.75 AT&T cable route
BL 3.55 Wisteria Dr; end of Black Hill Trail	BL 7.8 leave AT&T cable route
4.0 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr M.S.	L 7.85 at T on paved Black Hill Trail
L 4.7 Father Hurley Blvd	7.95 pipeline
	L 8.15 at T before Picnic La to stay on Black Hill Trail
	8.4 parking/restrooms/vending

---

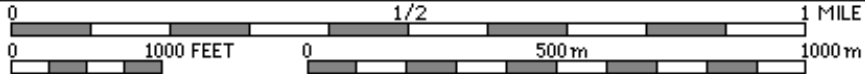
### \*4.65 Mile Route

S 2.25 leave lake; trail X on R is BH Trail	L 2.35 Waters Landing Rd (pickup cues at mile 6.4 on 8.4 mile route)
---	--

# Black Hill Trail



MN  $\uparrow$  TN  
10 $\frac{1}{2}$ °



Printed from TOPO! ©1999 Wildflower Productions (www.topo.com)

## Hard Rock, Field Crest Spur, and Cabin Branch Trails

Distance: 6.55 or 5.1 miles

Rating: VI or V; mostly dirt trails through woods and fields, hilly

### 6.55 Mile Route

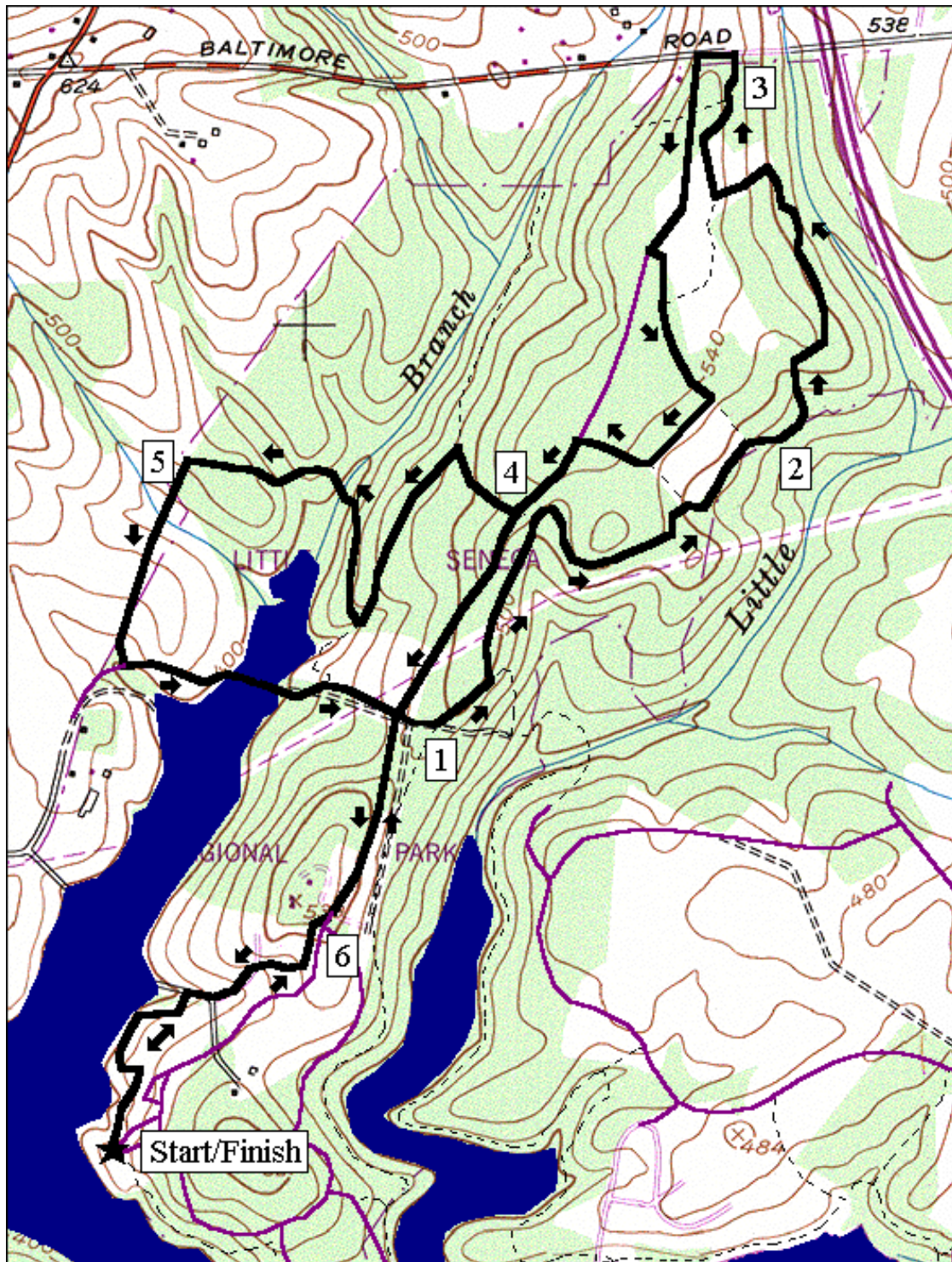
	L 3.25 trail X on L to Field Crest Spur Trail
R 0.0 from the restroom/vending building	BR 3.35 Field Crest Spur Trail
L/R 0.15 trail X's before the Visitor Center; go behind the Visitor Center	BR 3.5 to stay on Field Crest Spur Trail
	BR 3.6 to stay on Field Crest Spur Trail
R 0.4 at T; start climbing	
	L 3.7 Lake Ridge Dr
R/L 0.6 at park office; onto Lake Ridge Rd	<*
	R 3.85 Cabin Branch Trail (light blue blaze w/"CB" on top); L is to HR Trail
R 0.9 gate; gravel Rd to Black Hill (BH) Trail on R at Black Hill Rd on L	
	L 4.0 to stay on Cabin Branch Trail
L 1.0 trail X; L is to Hard Rock (HR) Trail; S & R is BH Trail	4.1 Trail X on R (unmarked)
	R 4.35 Cabin Branch Trail on R
L 1.1 trail X on L to HR Trail	4.65 suspension bridge over stream
1.35 begin HR Trail (blue blazes w/"HR" in white on top); trail X on L to Lake Ridge Dr	4.85 wooden bridge over stream
1.7 trail X; S to sunny area	
	L 5.0 at T to stay on Cabin Branch Trail
R 1.9 at T to stay on Hard Rock Trail	
2.2 rock piles	L 5.3 Black Hill Rd
2.5 trail bears left at field; following mowed grass to stay on HR Trail	5.4 causeway over lake inlet
	5.55 Cabin Branch Trail on L
	R 5.65 Lake Ridge Dr
R 2.6 at T in field; Field Crest Spur Trail	>*
2.8 AT&T cable line trail on L	R/L 5.95 R on office driveway; L onto paved BH Trail
L 2.9 W Old Baltimore Rd; use shoulder	L 5.95 at bottom to stay on Black Hill Trail
L 2.95 Lake Ridge Dr (park entrance)	L/R 6.45 trail X; Visitor Center on L
3.0 AT&T cable line trail	
	L 6.55 parking/restrooms/vending

---

### \*5.1 Mile Route

	4.2 Black Hill Rd on R (pickup cues at mile 5.95 on 6.55 mile route)
4.05 Contact Station	

# Hard Rock, Field Crest Spur and Cabin Branch Trails



MN ↑ TN  
10½°

0 1/2 1 MILE  
0 1000 FEET 0 500m 1000m

Printed from TOPO! ©1999 Wildflower Productions (www.topo.com)