

## **Seneca Creek State Park, Schaeffer Farm**

North and only a half mile from the Black Rock Mill is the Schaeffer Farm Trail System. As part of the Seneca Creek State Park, the area is a hiking, horseback and cycling haven. Cyclists however, are the people you'll see most often here. The unpaved trails braid through trees, go along the edges and pass right through the middles of the fields. Volunteers who created them designed them with cycling in-mind and designed them to be environmentally friendly. Most are not too technically demanding for the cyclists which means they are pretty good for runners. It is open during daylight only and off-trail use of the area is restricted.

### **Getting There**

From the Capital Beltway (I-495), take I-270 headed west. About 10 miles from the beltway, take Exit 10, Clopper Road (Rte. 117) headed west. Turn left after 4.25 miles on Schaeffer Rd which is just past the intersection with Rte. 118. Just under 2 miles later, as the road bends right, bear left onto a gravel road where there are signs for Schaeffer Farm Trails and the Grey Rock Ranch. Quickly turn left again following the bumpy road to the end and park. The trail head is at the very end of the parking area.

### **Area Routes**

#### Schaeffer Farm White Trail (3.4 miles, III)

The White Trail is a nice introduction to the area and makes a clean loop that's easy to follow. What you'll find are mellow trails through the woods and field edges that roll through small stream valleys. As you near and then parallel Black Rock Rd., you gently climb out of one stream valley and start to drop into another. Plenty of deer hang around there in the mornings and late in the day. When crossing a gravel road, you can optionally check-out the Black Rock Mill by turning left and right, and going down the steep hill. Continuing down the White Trail, fly down the curvy roller coaster trail until you hit a telecommunications cable line clearing. This continues downhill more and makes a big dip before making a double stream crossing over stones. After that a sharp initial climb gives way to gradually flatter trail until you reach the start.

#### Schaeffer Farm Western Trails (7.65 or 6.25 or 8.65 miles, VII or VI or VIII)

The western portion of the Schaeffer Farm area is crisscrossed with several trails. The Yellow Trail is the main one, the most interesting and the longest. The Blue Trail creates many shortcuts for the tired and is mostly in the open fields through sometimes beautiful rolling hills. The Red Trail makes an extension off the Yellow Trail.

When the Yellow Trail breaks off from the White Trail it rambles, dropping through the woods toward Great Seneca Creek and climbing back again, to the fields two times. In this meander it crosses small streams and gullies but does not get close enough to the Great Seneca Creek for a view of it. Fallen trees on the trail in this first part generally appear not to be cleared from the trail. Instead they are used as obstacles for the mountain bikers. Some of these have been stacked 3 ft. high like horse jumps for the extreme and the accomplished to test their skills and

tap into their adrenaline. Misjudgements and chain rings eventually saw other small trunks in half.

A crossroads of sorts, one of many for Yellow/Blue trail intersections, marks the beginning of the loop portion of the Yellow Trail. Some of this loop is wooded but more of it is along the edges of farmed fields. It's also flatter than parts of the Yellow Trail not on the loop. Mountains are visible on the horizon. The Red Trail extension is a lollipop route off the Yellow loop. It goes through grassy fields and has one short steep drop to a stream crossing on the out and back leg. Different connected segments of the Blue Trail act as spoke wheels inside the Yellow loop to shorten it. While coming back, the Yellow Trail does get close enough to the Little Seneca Creek for brief views. Before coming back to the crossroads where the loop portion began, the trail crosses and climbs more rolling fields. When the hay has been bailed into giant cinnamon rolls there, the fine agrarian landscape provides a feast for your eyes. Take the Blue Trail back through more of the meal and dessert on the final winding parts through the woods back to the parking area.

Note that no water or other amenities are available on any of the trails. Plan accordingly. Trails are generally well traveled on weekends by cyclists and occasional horseback riders who might help you if you get lost. Trail blazes and markers are well placed in the woods but not always at trail intersections in the fields. More than a few cyclists commented on being disoriented but by plowing ahead, *knew* they would get where they were going. If you have one, a compass or hand-held GPS could be useful on a first trip. Signs are provided at some intersections with arrows and a "P" to designate the shortest way back.

### **Nearby and Connecting Zones**

Seneca State Park, Black Rock Mill  
Seneca State Park, Lake Clopper  
Black Hill Regional Park

### **What to do Afterward**

#### Food and Drink

Picnic

Earnies Restaurant and Pub - 301 869-8200

Bagels DeLox - 301 216-0070

#### Entertainment and Edification

Black Rock Mill - interpretive exhibits

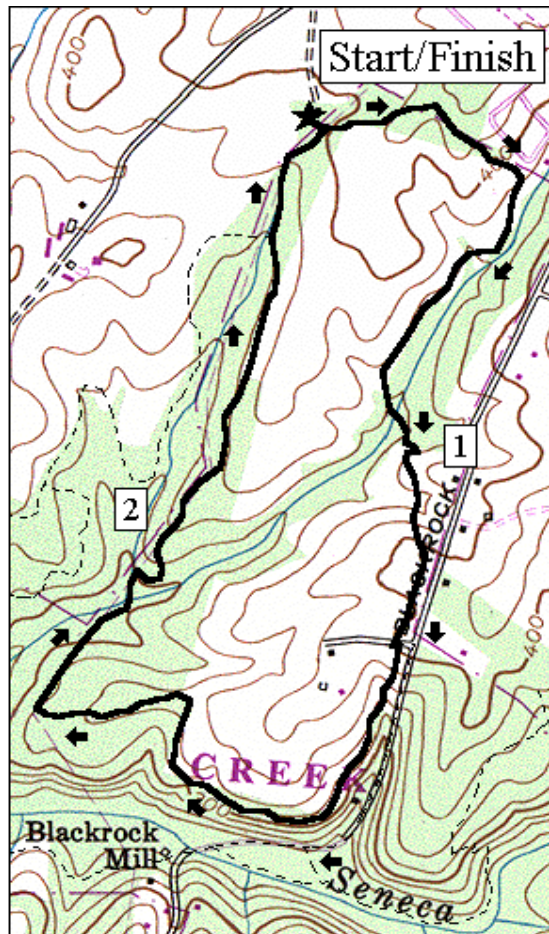
## Schaeffer Farm White Trail

Distance: 3.4 miles

Rating: III; dirt trails through woods and fields, small hills

0.0 from the parking, head east

- L 0.0 White Trail  
(white blazes)
- 0.55 wooden bridge  
over stream gully
- 0.75 wooden bridge  
over stream gully
- 0.85 cross two streams  
on stones then  
switchback up  
small hill to field
- 1.1 trail X on L to  
Black Rock Rd
- 1.25 gravel Rd X  
(optional L/R is  
to Black Rock  
Rd and the mill  
remains; mill is  
0.5 one-way from  
White Trail)
- 2.2 begin  
transcontinental  
cable line  
clearing
- R 2.4 White Trail  
leaves cable  
clearing



MN TN 0 10 1/2 0 1000 FEET 0 500 m 1000 m 1 MILE  
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BR 2.45 White Trail returns to cable clearing and crosses stream and creek on stones

- R 2.5 White Trail leaves cable clearing, crosses creek and then climbs
- 3.2 Yellow Trail (yellow blazes) on L

- L 3.4 trail X on L to parking
- 3.4 parking

## Schaeffer Farm Western Trails

Distance: 7.65 or 6.25 or 8.65 miles

Rating: VII or VI or VIII; dirt trails through woods and fields, rolling hills

### 7.65 Mile Route

		4.3	Red Trail on R
		>***	
	0.0	east from parking	BR 5.0 to stay on Yellow Trail at Blue Trail on L; trail to R enters trees
R	0.0	White Trail (white blazes)	
R	0.2	Yellow Trail on R crosses transcontinental cable clearing	L/R 5.3 on gravel road to stay on Yellow Trail; tower on R
<*			S 5.85 crossroads completes loop; S is Blue Trail; L & R is Yellow Trail
BL	1.1	to stay on Yellow Trail; Blue Trail on R; follow yellow blazes	BR 6.3 onto trail leaving double-track in the open field; to stay on the Blue Trail
L	2.1	at T to stay on Yellow Trail (yellow/blue blazes)	L 6.45 in woods; Yellow/Blue Trail
BL	2.1	trail X on R; Blue Trail goes in field	BL 6.45 Blue Trail bears L; Yellow Trail goes R
	3.25	cross roads marks beginning of Yellow Trail loop; Blue Trail on R joins; Yellow on L is return loop	
>*			S 6.6 Yellow Trail joins from R
BR	3.4	to stay on Yellow Trail at Blue Trail on L	L 7.45 White Trail after cable clearing
	3.9	gravel Rd on L to double-track is Blue Trail shortcut	L 7.65 to parking
<***			7.65 parking

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### \*6.25 Mile Route

		BL 1.4	onto double-track in middle of field
BR	1.1	Blue Trail on R	R 1.8 cross roads marks beginning of Yellow Trail loop; Blue Trail and Yellow on R; Yellow is S & L too (pickup cues at mile 3.4 on 7.65 mile route)
	1.25	Yellow Trail joins from L	
R	1.25	Blue Trail goes into field; Yellow Trail bears L	

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### 8.65 Mile Route\*\*

		BL 5.0	complete loop; return
R	4.3	Red Trail on R goes down steep hill	R 5.3 Yellow Trail (pickup cues at mile 5.0 on 7.65 mile route)
BL	4.6	begin loop; cross gully	

## Schaeffer Farm Western Trails

