

South Run District Park

The wealth of trails in Fairfax County really becomes apparent when you start exploring the paths around South Run District Park and Burke Lake. Just about every high school cross country runner in Fairfax County is familiar with Burke Lake; location of the District and Regional meets held annually in the fall. Others as well have been coming for decades to the placid shores of Burke Lake for running, walking and bicycling. South Run District Park is a little over a mile south of Burke Lake. It has a relatively new sports facilities for swimmers, ball players, and for field hockey players, there is an indoor field house. By starting from South Run District Park, you'll escape an entrance fee for out of county residents who go to Burke Lake Park, but not likely escape the large numbers of people who come to both parks. Also nearby are many other lakes with trails around them. Lake Mercer can be accessed via the South Run trail and is south of the park. Lake Huntsman Lake is just across the Fairfax County Parkway from the park. Using the Fairfax County Parkway Trail (FCPT), you can go toward Fairfax City and make loop to Lake Barton. All of these lakes are county reservoirs. Going in the other direction on the FCPT, you can connect to the Accotink Creek stream valley trail system and loop back near Middle Run.

Getting There

From the Capital Beltway

Take Braddock Rd., Rte 620, west for 1.75 miles. Turn left onto Burke Lake Rd. Turn left approximately 3.5 miles later onto the Fairfax County Parkway, Rte. 7100. Go just over 2 miles and turn right into South Run District Park. Proceed down the hill, passing fields and the natatorium on the left. Park near the trail head, behind the natatorium and near the field house.

Area Routes

Burke Lake (7.35 miles, VI)

This very popular route is well worth the trip. A bluestone trail wanders around the fingers of Burke Lake under pine and oak trees. The flat loop around the lake is marked-off in half-mile segments and the whole way around is 4.61 miles long. A fitness course also is on the lake loop. To get there from South Run District Park, follow a paved trail upstream along South Run. The trail reaches Burke Lake after climbing a hill at the dam, in one of the few sunny parts of the loop. Water and refreshments are available in the park. Though several trails branch off the lake loop, the way is easy to follow and you're almost always within sight of the cool blue waters.

Burke Shores (5.25, 4.55, 3.5 or 1.5 miles, V, IV, III or I)

The FCPT parallels the trail along South Run toward Burke Lake. Several trails connect the two and can be used as alternate ways to get to Burke Lake, or for shorter loops. From the parking area use sidewalks, gravel trails and the park roadside to climb to the FCPT. The FCPT has a slight uphill grade as you head in the direction of the City of Fairfax. It's not as nice as the trails along South Run or around Burke Lake but the trail is far enough away from the parkway to still be enjoyable. Your first option to cut back is almost immediately on your left, after the climb to the FCPT. It a loosely defined dirt trail through power lines and is popular with mountain

bicyclists. It drops quickly just before reaching the trail along South Run. Skipping this, the next option is to pass through South Run neighborhood streets. That way is gradually downhill after turning off the FCPT, and reaches the trail in the South Run valley, very near the Burke Lake dam. The next option is to turn left using both a gravel road and trail that drops significantly before reaching Burke Lake near Mile Marker 3. The final option is similar, using another unpaved road through the Burke Lake Wilderness Area. It reaches the lake near the northernmost point; near where Opossum Branch enters the lake. Both the last two options are wooded quieter parts of the park that most don't see. Use the Burke Lake Trail and/or the South Run trail to get back to South Run District Park.

Lake Mercer (4.55 or 5.1 miles, IV or V)

Burke Lake's waters empty into South Run. A couple of miles downstream, a second dam creates Lake Mercer. Lake Mercer is smaller but rather pretty. Going up and down the short steep hills on the way to the lake I saw through the trees a Great Blue Heron flying below me and over the wetlands. The paved trail runs out before reaching the dam. A dirt trail, more paved trail and suburban street sidewalks bring you to the dam. Crossing the dam is awkward. Gates on both ends block bicycle access. You must cross the grassy (dry) spillway overrun for the dam then scamper up a small but steep grassy hill onto the dam. After the dam, a paved trail continues partway around the lake again before use of a dirt trail on a dyke, and a gravel road are necessary. The route eventually leaves the wooded stream valley getting back to South Run District Park. Cutting through woods on small a dirt trail, the route follows along the inside borders of the park on the grassy Spartan Trail. The Spartan Trail loops the park but is not included in this guide because many parts of it are too ambiguously marked. It can be followed on this route however to the trail head and parking lot behind the field house.

The longer option of this route climbs the hill on the opposite side of South Run up to a paved trail along Silverbrook Rd. In getting there it passes through suburban streets. It does the same when returning to the main route. The scenery is nicer on the shorter option however.

Huntsman Lake (3.8 miles, III)

To get to Huntsman Lake, climb up to the Fairfax County Parkway Trail and go east only one third a mile. At the traffic light, cross over the parkway and go down to the lake on a wide paved trail along Huntsman Blvd. Don't turn right again until you pass the lake. Turn onto Golden Ball Tavern Ct. where the trail ends. Though there's what seems to be a trail dropping to the lake shore almost immediately on your right, that path ends abruptly. Golden Ball Tavern Ct. is fairly quiet. Leave the road, turning right through a gate on what seems to be a driveway dropping down to the lake. The driveway becomes a paved trail which climbs back up to the dam. After crossing the dam, the paved trail ends but you can follow a dirt trail a short way through the woods to an intersection with another paved trail. Bearing left, a sort of outer loop trail goes through the woods. Turning right sharply, the inner loop trail stays closest to the lake; closer than anywhere else on the route. Both options join together again near a basketball court though you must make one unmarked turn when using the outer loop. There are also several other intersecting trails that may confuse you if you are not familiar with the area. The paved trails end again after the basketball courts at Dorothy Lane. By going left up the hill, you can continue on an asphalt trail to the Fairfax County Parkway. If you want, go straight on Dorothy Lane to avoid

the hill for a little while more but doing so only increases your eventual climb. All route options listed add-up to the same distance.

West Springfield (10.75, 6.4, or 10.3 miles, X, VII or X)

The Fairfax County Parkway was originally designed as part of an outer beltway. Traffic lights were added and it never became that. As is, it snakes and arcs across Fairfax County joining the southern and western regions. As of the year 2000, the parkway is not completely finished, but it does run unbroken from Herndon to West Springfield. People can run or cycle most of this length on paved trails that parallel it. For a trail of its size, the Fairfax County Parkway Trail (FCPT) is sparsely used when compared to others such as the Mt. Vernon Trail or the W&OD Trail. Of course, with it being as close as it is to the parkway, the FCPT isn't as nice as those other trails. The FCPT is sunny with almost no trees in-between the trail and the parkway. Water stops are rare and signs are lacking at some of the few twisting turns that it takes; for instance, in the City of Fairfax. Between the City of Fairfax and West Springfield, the trail is at its best. It rolls up and down 100-150 ft. graded hills and if not under trees itself, it is usually surrounded by them.

This route climbs to the FCPT, then follows the trail east of South Run District Park. The full route goes to the edge of West Springfield, within very short striking distance of the Accotink Creek valley trail system. Leaving the FCPT there, it loops back on an unpaved trail near West Springfield Elementary School. One alternative option to go back is to follow the trail the way you came out. The longer way uses streets and neighborhood trails to parallel Middle Run and reach Huntsman Lake. An attempt at making an unbroken paved trail along Middle Run was apparently foiled by the county being unable to acquire all the private property or right-of-ways necessary. The shortest option turns around at Shady Palm Dr. (it becomes Sydenstricker Rd.) where it crosses the Fairfax Parkway, then follows the long option return route to Huntsman Lake. Long hills, both down and up are to be encountered no matter which way you go. It's generally downhill however, when going out to West Springfield. The route crosses perpendicular to both the Middle Run and Pohick Creek valleys before nearly reaching Accotink Creek. The FCPT is fine for bicycling. In-line skating on it east of South Run District Park should only be attempted by those who are exceptionally proficient with long hills and occasional debris on the pavement.

Lake Barton (11.55 or 10.7 miles, X)

Lake Barton is one of two reservoirs making up the head waters of Pohick Creek. Nearby Woodglen Lake is the other. Lake Barton had been part of the community for years but in 1999, after an unusually wet spring, and before the onset of Hurricane Floyd, County officials had opened up flood gates. Even with the gates open, rainwater was filling-up the lake as fast as it was emptying so during the bad weather, the maintenance crews had to leave. Further bad weather prevented crews being dispatched to close the gates and the lake emptied. Angry residents, used to feeding the geese and walking around the water with their children, suffered the sight of cracked dry mud when extreme drought ensued all summer long.

Hopefully it will be full of water on your trip there. The waters are nice to look at even if there's not much to drink on the route (unless you stop in at a store). Leaving South Run District Park

and heading west and north on the Fairfax County Parkway Trail (FCPT) to get there, you will climb gradually. It's less hilly than the way heading east. After you pass Burke Lake Park on the left, the trail is on Lake Haven La. for a short way. Turning right, follow a narrow flat paved trail along Roberts Parkway to Burke Centre Parkway. Were you to continue along Roberts Parkway on the narrow hilly paved trail, there are ways to connect to Lake Barton but they cross private property. Turn left instead, to follow the road down toward the lake which is on the right. The short option skips the 0.80 mile loop around it, which is on a slightly rolling paved trail. After the lake, pass the shopping center and turn left at Ox Road, Rte. 123, to get on the FCPT again. After a mile, the trail returns to parallel the Fairfax County Parkway for the trip back. Rolling hills on the treeless parkway trail will challenge you until you reach Burke Lake Park again. The last leg of the route is slightly downhill. Remember that there is little water available on this sunny route with long straightaways.

Nearby and Connecting Zones

Pohick Creek
Prince William Parkway
Lake Accotink

What to do Afterward

Food and Drink

Spartan's Family Restaurant - 703 503-5800

Glory Days Grill - 703 866-1911

Pino's Italian Restaurant - 703 425-1889

Pacific Café - 703 239-3838

Barbeque World - 703 503-7100

HomeGrown Markets - Saturdays 8AM-noon, May–November; K-Mart Center at Burke Pkwy -
703-642-5173

Entertainment and Edification

Hidden Pond Nature Center - 703 451-9588

South Run Recreation Center - 703 644-7070

Fountainhead Regional Park - boat rentals, miniature golf, hiking - 703 250-9124

Burke Lake

Distance: 7.35 miles

Rating: VI; mostly bluestone trails; one climb to the lake and one at the end; shady

- 0.0 from the parking lot follow the paved trail into the woods
- 0.15 trail X on L to Lake Mercer (unmarked)
- 0.3 trail X on R (dirt) through power lines (unmarked)
- 0.5 pass under Lee Chapel Rd
- 1.3 trail X on R to Laketree Road (unmarked)

- L 1.35 Burke Lake Trail at dam
- 1.7 Mile Mark 4

- BR 1.9 onto trail after boat ramp
- 2.0 park road

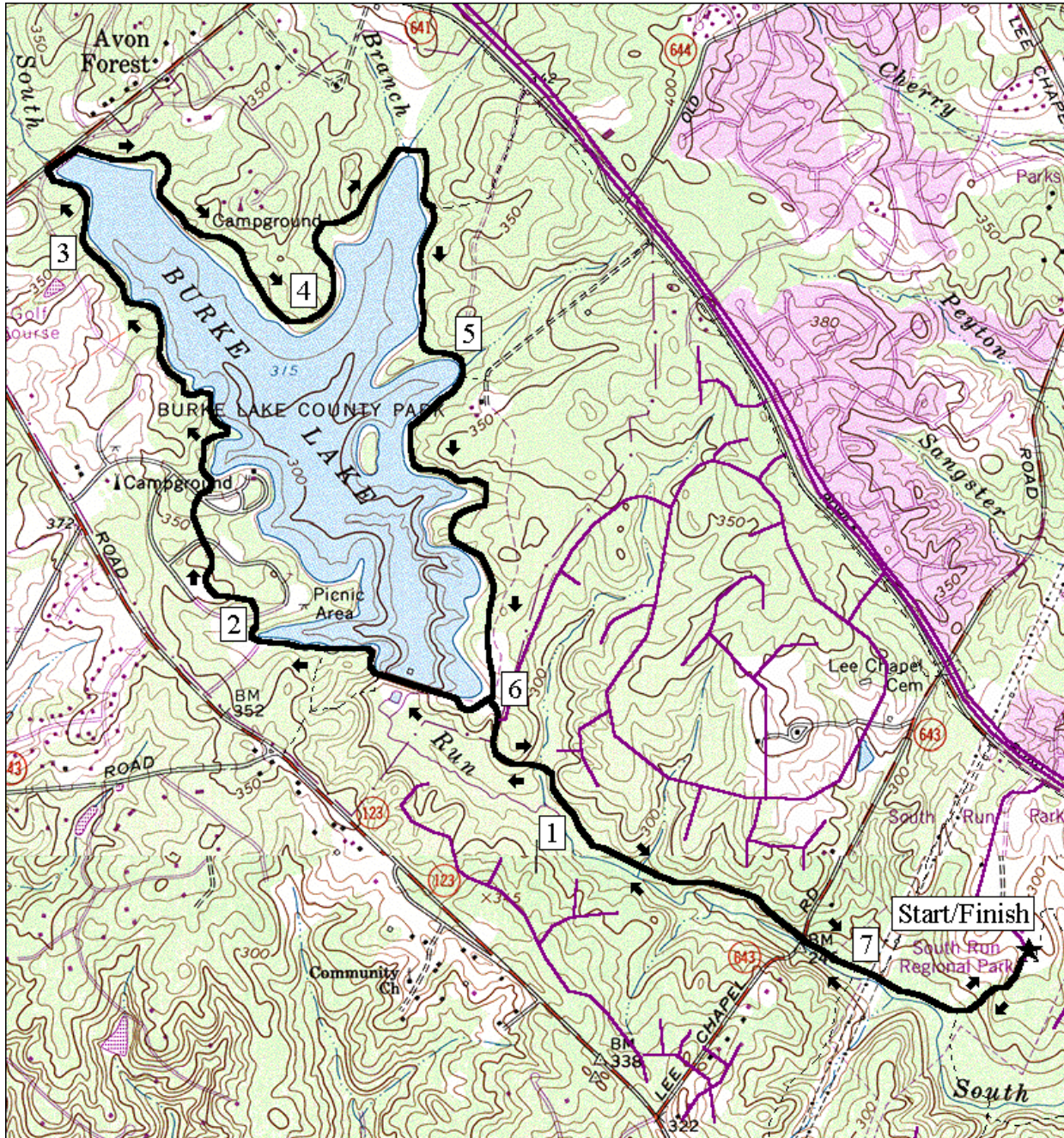
- L 2.15 trail X; L to stay on trail 60 yards after passing restrooms/water (follow sign)
- 2.2 park road and Mile Mark 4.5
- 2.3 park road; boat rental on R, Mile Mark 0 (water/snack bar near rentals)
- 2.65 trail X on L to kiddie RR
- 2.7 to amphitheater
- 2.8 Mile Marker 0.5

- BR 3.2 at park road

- BR 3.25 trail continues on R after bridge
- 3.3 Mile Marker 1
- 4.3 Mile Marker 2
- 4.7 gravel trail X on L to Fairfax County Parkway Trail (unmarked)
- 4.8 Mile Maker 2.5
- 5.1 trail X on L (unmarked) to gravel road & Fairfax County Parkway Trail
- 5.3 Mile Marker 3
- 5.8 Mile Marker 3.5

- L 6.0 trail X on L at dam follows South Run
- 6.05 trail X on L to Laketree Road (unmarked)
- 6.85 pass under Lee Chapel Rd
- 7.05 trail X on L through power lines (unmarked)
- 7.2 trail X on R to Lake Mercer (unmarked); go uphill
- 7.35 trail ends at parking lot in South Run District Park

Burke Lake



MN ↑ TN
10 1/2°

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

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Burke Shores

Distance: 5.25, 4.55, 3.5 or 1.5 Miles

Rating: V, IV, III or I; paved and unpaved trails; climb going out and downhill on the return

5.25 Mile Route

| | Area |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 0.0 from the parking lot; go between the field house and pool using sidewalks and trails toward the park exit | 2.4 trail X on R 2.45 trail X on L after bend in road |
| L 0.5 Fairfax Co Pkwy Trail (FCPT) | L 2.6 at T; Burke Lake Trail (unmarked) 2.7 Mile Marker 2.5 |
| <* | 3.0 trail X on L (unmarked) |
| 0.65 trail X on L through powerlines | >*** |
| 0.85 Lee Chapel Rd | 3.2 Mile Marker 3 |
| 1.05 Rolling View Dr | L 3.85 trail X on L before dam (unmarked) 3.95 trail X on L to Laketree Dr |
| <*** | >*** |
| 1.35 trail X on L to Woodchase Dr | >*** |
| 1.7 trail is on the road | 4.75 underpass Lee Chapel Rd |
| 1.75 paved trail continues | 4.95 trail X on L from powerlines (unmarked) |
| <*** | >* |
| 1.85 gravel road on L (unmarked) | 5.1 trail X on R to Lake Mercer (unmarked); go uphill |
| 1.9 Old Keene Mill Rd on R | 5.25 parking lot in South Run Park |
| L 2.2 gravel road on L; Burke Wilderness | |

*1.5 Mile Route

| | |
|--------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| L 0.65 trail X on L into powerlines (dirt) | L 1.2 at T; paved South Run trail (pickup cues at mile 5.1 on 5.25 mile route) |
|--------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

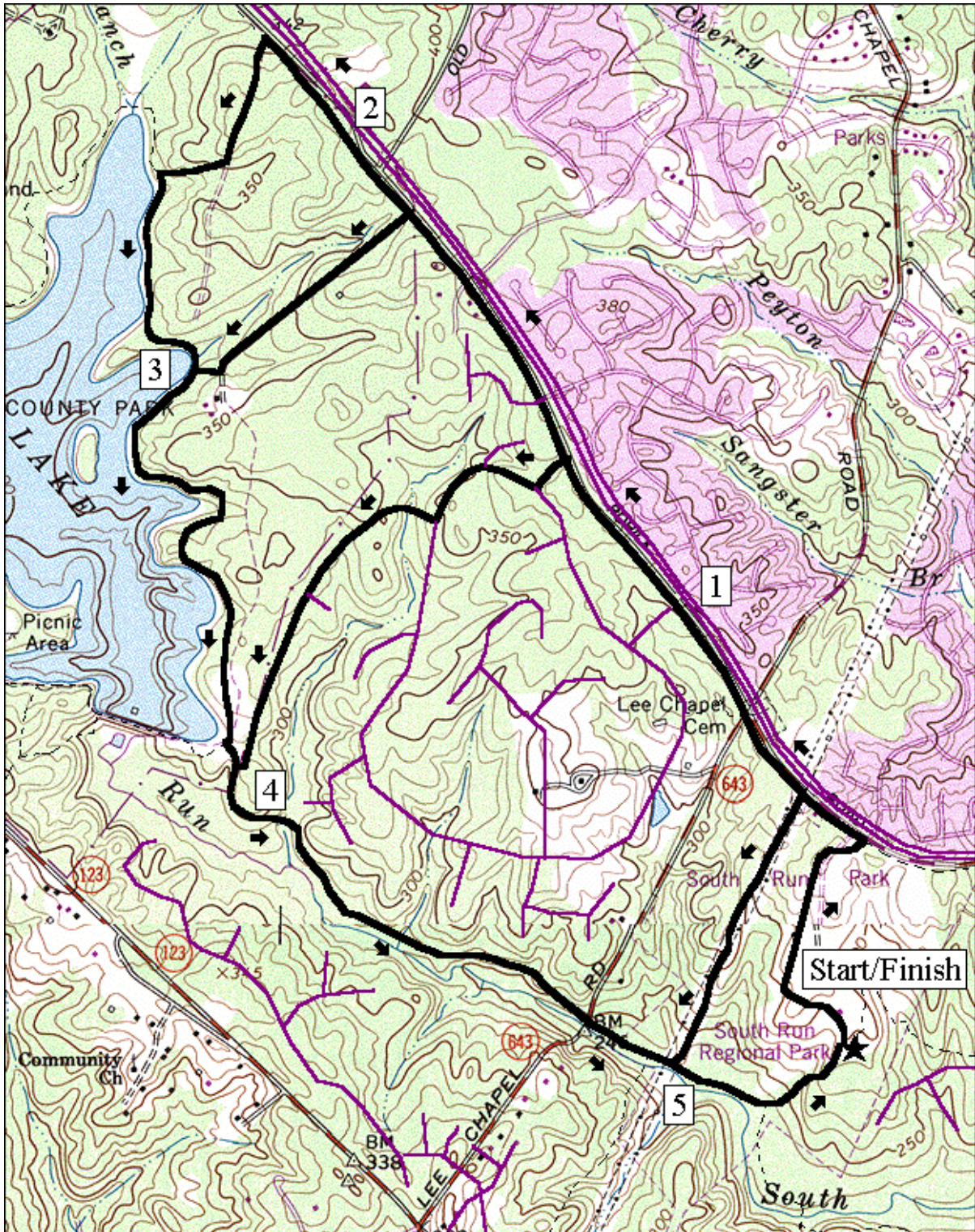
**3.5 Mile Route

| | |
|------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| L 1.35 trail X on L to Woodchase Dr (unmarked) | R 1.55 Lake Tree Dr |
| R 1.45 South Park Circle | R/L 2.2 trail X on R near large boulder; L onto South Run trail (pickup cues at mile 4.75 on 5.25 mile route) |

***4.55 Mile Route

| | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| L 1.85 gravel road on L (unmarked) | R 2.25 trail X on R at bottom of hill (unmarked) |
| | L 2.3 at T; Burke Lake Trail (pickup cues at mile 3.2 on 5.25 mile route) |

Burke Shores



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Lake Mercer

Distance: 4.55, or 5.1 Miles

Rating: IV or V; paved and unpaved trails with some steep hills

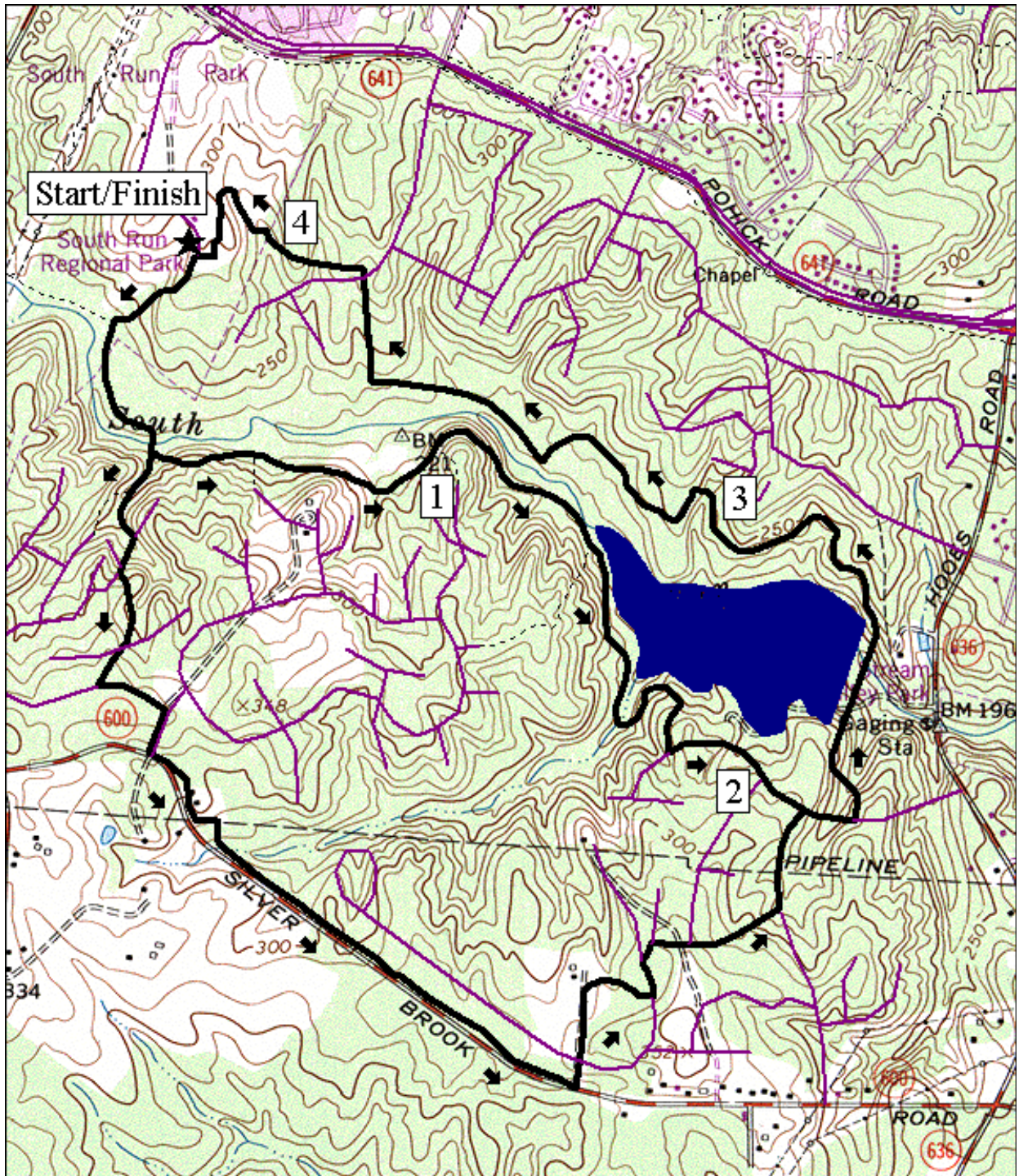
4.55 Mile Route

| | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | L/R 2.35 after spillway and short steep hill; BL; R on paved trail; cross dam |
| 0.0 from parking follow the paved trail into the woods | |
| L 0.15 trail X on L to Lake Mercer (unmarked) | L 2.55 through gate & L at T; trail X on R 2.9 trail X on R |
| <* | S 3.15 paved trail ends continue S on dirt trail; also trail X on L to lake |
| L 0.4 trail X on L after crossing creek toward townhouses | 3.35 trail leaves dyke |
| 0.5 trail X on R to Thornfield Ct | R 3.4 at T; gravel road |
| 1.0 trail X on R to Bressingham Ct | |
| 1.25 trail X on R to Hollington Pl | R 3.7 Wagon Trail Rd on R (unmarked) |
| 1.3 paved trail ends; continue on dirt | |
| BL 1.4 trail splits; paved trail at 1.45 | CL 3.9 Huntsman Blvd to paved trail |
| S 1.75 trail ends at Jeffery Ct | R/L 4.05 at end of paved trail; R on dirt trail; L at grassy Spartan Trail around field |
| L 1.85 Triple Ridge Rd | BL 4.35 following Spartan Trail sign |
| 2.1 Bayberry Ridge Rd on R | |
| >* | L/R 4.5 around field house |
| L 2.15 gravel trail on L toward dam; pass through cable fence | 4.55 South Run trail head on L |

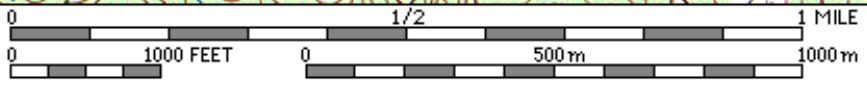
*5.1 Mile Route

| | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | L 1.85 Silverthorn Dr |
| S 0.65 trail X on L after crossing creek | S 2.0 trail head at end of Silverthorn Dr |
| 0.5 trail X on R to South Oak Hollow La; trail ahead becomes gravel | L 2.15 trail ends; Silverline Dr |
| R 0.6 Oak Stream Ct (unmarked) | R 2.2 Tabor La |
| L 0.65 Oak Crest La | CR 2.25 Chestnut Ridge Rd |
| CL 0.85 Oakington Dr | L 2.5 Bayberry Ridge Rd |
| R/L 0.95 Old Barrington Dr/Silverbrook Rd | R 2.6 at T; Triple Ridge Rd (pickup cues at mile 2.15 on 4.55 mile route) |
| L/R 1.1 pipeline trail; pavement ends/starts | |

Lake Mercer



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Huntsman Lake

Distance: 3.8 Miles

Rating: III; mostly paved trails with some roads; modest hills; mostly sunny

3.8 Mile Route A

- 0.0 from the parking lot; go between the field house and pool using sidewalks and trails toward the park exit
- R 0.5 Fairfax Co Pkwy Trail (FCPT)
- CL 0.85 Huntsman Blvd
1.05 Dorothy La on R
1.25 trail X on R to lake
- R 1.3 Golden Ball Tavern Ct; use shoulder and pass trail X on R to lake
- R 1.75 paved ramp/gate on R at Gold Leaf Ct on L; becomes a trail
2.0 trail becomes dirt after crossing dam
<*
- BL 2.05 onto paved trail
- 2.1 trail X on R to inner trail
2.15 trail X on L toward Middle Run Steam Valley (unmarked)
2.25 trail X on L to houses
2.3 trail X on L to houses
- L 2.45 at trail X
2.5 trail X on R; basketball court
>*, <**
- L 2.6 trail ends at court; L on paved trail leaving from court
- R 2.8 Fairfax County Pkwy
- XS 3.0 Huntsman Blvd
>**
- L 3.35 into South Run Park; use roadside, gravel path and sidewalk
3.8 South Run trail head
-

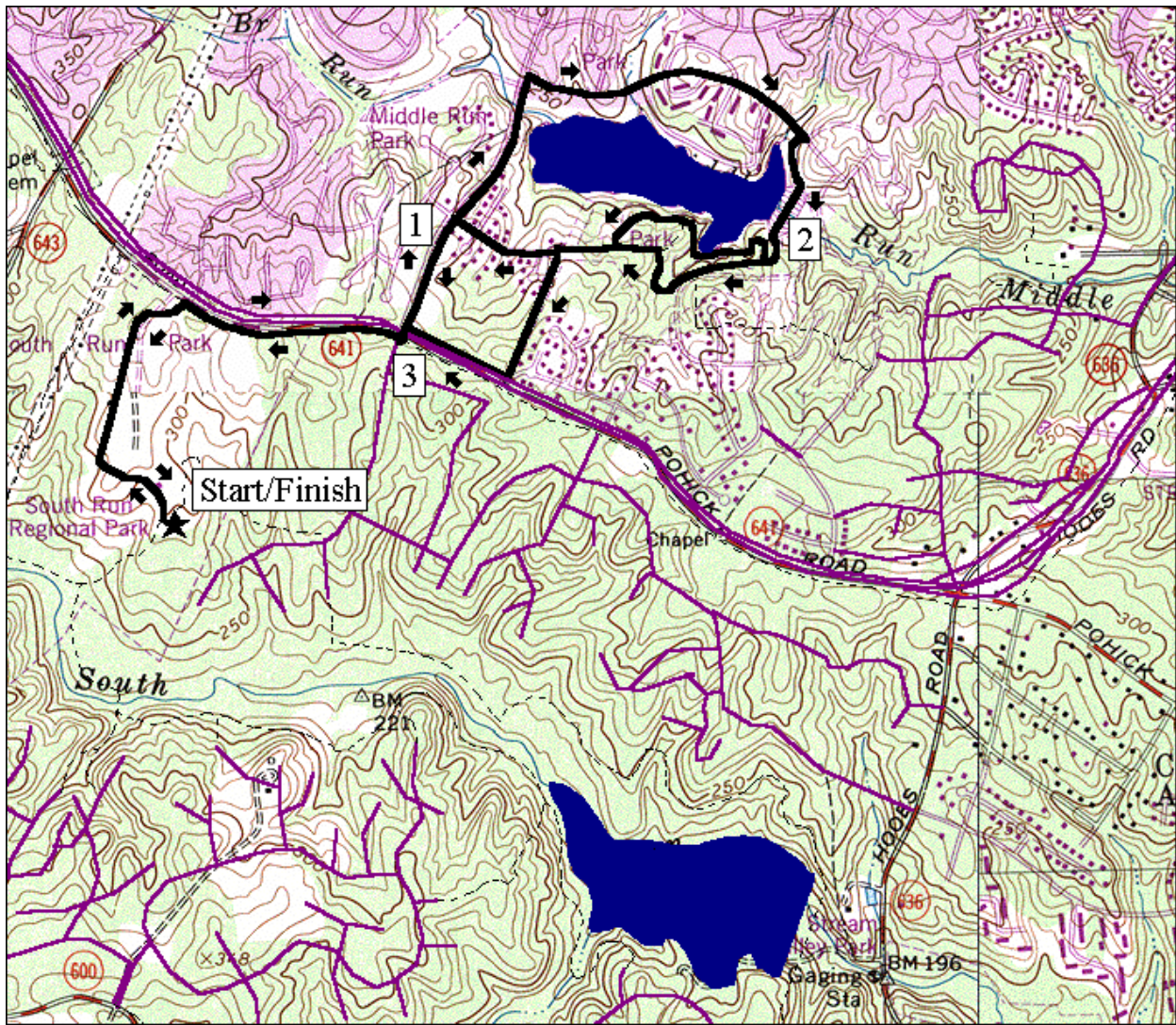
*3.8 Mile Route B

- 2.3 trail X on L
- R 2.05 paved trail X (sharp R turn)
2.2 trail X on L to outer trail
- R 2.55 at T; basketball court on L (pickup cues at mile 2.6 on 3.8 mile route A)
-

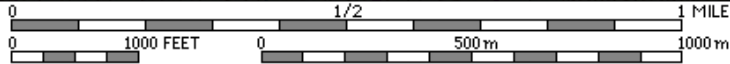
**3.8 Mile Route C

- CR 3.0 cross the Fairfax Co Pkwy to the FCPT (pickup cues at mile 3.35 on 3.8 mile route A)
- S 2.6 Dorothy La (unmarked)
- L 2.8 Huntsman Blvd

Huntsman Lake



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West Springfield

Distance: 10.75, 6.4 or 10.3 Miles

Rating: X, VII, or X; mostly paved trails with some sidewalks; long rolling hills; sunny

10.75 Mile Route

| | | | | |
|-----|------|------|-------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | | R | 6.25 | paved trail X on R |
| | 0.0 | | | from the parking lot; go between the field house and pool using sidewalks and trails toward the park exit |
| R | 0.5 | | | Fairfax Co Pkwy Trail (FCPT) |
| | 0.85 | | | Huntsman Blvd |
| | 1.85 | | | Hooes Rd; long downhill ahead |
| | 2.5 | | | bridge over Middle Run; begin uphill |
| CL | 2.9 | | | Shady Palm Dr to stay on FCPT |
| | <* | | | |
| CR | 3.0 | | | after Fairfax Co Pkwy bridge; onto FCPT |
| | 3.55 | | | bridge over Pohick Creek |
| L | 3.8 | | | at Stream Way to stay on FCPT; follow paved trail past basketball court |
| BR | 3.95 | | | at split in trail |
| R | 4.05 | | | Rolling Rd |
| L | 4.15 | | | at Spring Forest Ct on R; to stay on FCPT along Hunter Village Dr |
| XS | 4.25 | | | Hunter Village Dr; to stay on FCPT |
| L | 4.75 | | | Hunter Village Dr; use shoulder |
| | 4.85 | | | trail X on R to Accotink Creek valley |
| | 5.05 | | | Lobelia La |
| L | 5.1 | | | trail X on L down to creek after railing |
| L/R | 5.4 | | | Lobelia La; unpaved trail into woods |
| L | 5.6 | | | at trail X; over metal bridge |
| R | 5.65 | | | Springfield Village Dr |
| CL | 5.85 | | | Rolling Rd |
| | | R | 6.5 | FCPT at T past basketball court |
| | | | 6.75 | bridge over Pohick Creek |
| | | | <*** | |
| | | R/CL | 7.3 | R on Sydenstricker; CL on Hooes Rd (!) |
| | | | >* | |
| | | | 7.8 | trail X on R (dead ends) |
| | | R | 7.9 | Middleford Dr |
| | | | 8.0 | trail X on R (does not connect to lake) |
| | | CL | 8.2 | Seabrook Ln |
| | | R | 8.3 | Shadowlake Way |
| | | L/R | 8.45 | CL on Bertito La; R on paved trail X on R |
| | | R | 8.55 | paved trail X on R |
| | | | 8.6 | trail crosses Octavia Ct |
| | | | 8.7 | trail crosses Maritime La |
| | | | 8.75 | trail crosses Cervantes Ct |
| | | R | 8.8 | at T; trail X (unmarked) |
| | | R | 8.9 | Huntsman Lake trail; outer loop to inner |
| | | R | 9.45 | at T; near basketball court |
| | | L | 9.5 | trail ends at court; L on paved trail leaving from court |
| | | R | 9.75 | Fairfax County Pkwy |
| | | XS | 9.9 | Huntsman Blvd |
| | | | >*** | |
| | | L | 10.25 | into South Run Park; use roadside, gravel path and sidewalk |
| | | | 10.75 | South Run trail head/parking |

*6.4 Mile Route

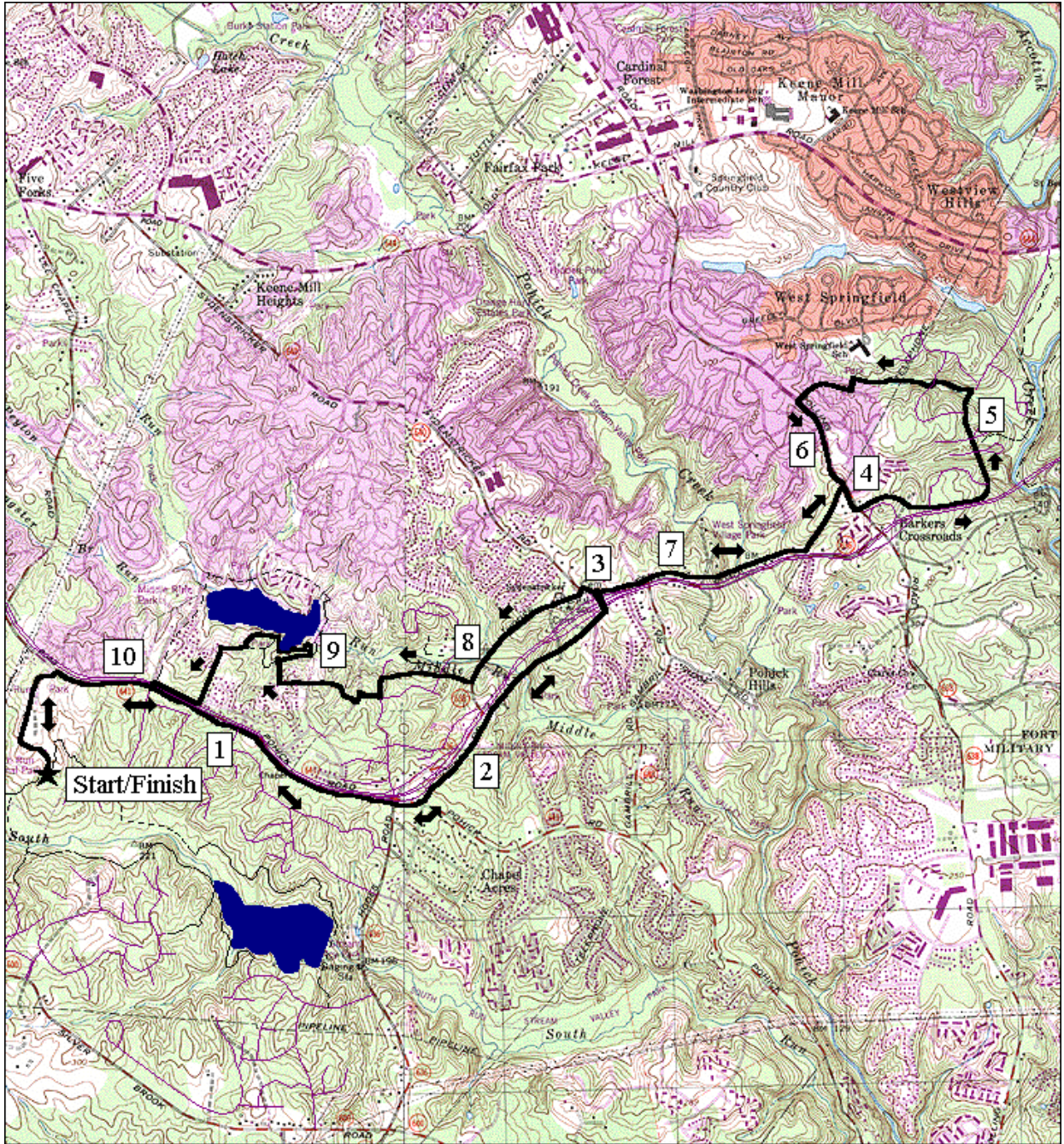
CL 3.0 FCPT goes R; CL onto Hooes Rd (pickup cues at mile 7.8 on 10.75 mile route)

*10.3 Mile Route

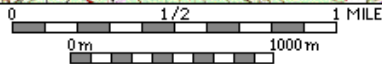
L 7.3 Sydenstricker Rd; becomes Shady Palm
 CR 7.4 Fairfax Pkwy exit ramp; to stay on FCPT

7.8 bridge over Middle Run
 8.45 Hooes Rd
 9.45 Huntsman Blvd (pickup cues at mile 10.25 on 10.75 mile route)

West Springfield



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10°



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Lake Barton

Distance: 11.55, or 10.7 Miles

Rating: X; sunny paved trails with long straightaways and long hills

11.55 and 10.7 Mile Route

| | | | |
|---------|-----|-------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | R | 4.9 | at T trail X; to stay on the loop trail |
| 0.0 | R | 5.0 | trail X; onto wooden bridge to stay on lake loop |
| | R | 5.25 | at trail X; L is to Burke Centre Pkwy |
| L 0.5 | | | Fairfax Co Pkwy Trail (FCPT) |
| 0.65 | L/R | 5.3 | at T; onto Burke Centre Pkwy sidewalk (food/water at 5.8) |
| 0.85 | | | Lee Chapel Rd |
| 1.05 | >* | | Rolling View Dr |
| 1.35 | L | 6.05 | trail X on L to Woodchase Dr |
| 1.7 | | | trail is on the road |
| 1.75 | | | paved trail continues |
| 1.85 | CL | 7.0 | at Robert Carter Rd for FCPT |
| 1.9 | | | Old Keene Mill Rd on R |
| 2.2 | | | gravel road on L; Burke Wilderness Area |
| 2.4 | | | trail ends; use Lake Haven La |
| BR 2.7 | | | Lake Haven Rd ends; trail head on R |
| 2.75 | | | Burke Lake Rd |
| R 3.15 | | | Kamrich St on L; R on Roberts Pkwy |
| R 3.7 | | | trail X on R; to stay along Roberts Pkwy |
| CL 3.8 | | | Burke Centre Pkwy (use shoulder) |
| <* | | | |
| R 4.5 | | | on paved road through gate to Lake Barton |
| BL 4.65 | | | onto paved trail on L |
| R 4.75 | | | trail X on R; to cross the dam |
| | R | 11.05 | into South Run District Park; use roadside, gravel path and sidewalks to go to parking and the South Run trail head |
| | | | 11.55 South Run trail head/parking |

Lake Barton

