

Trail Notes for Seneca Creek SP Clopper Lake Circuit

Description: Seneca Creek State Park is another "Urban Oasis" located halfway between Washington D.C. and Frederick, MD and minutes off of I-270. It features the 90 acre Clopper Lake, fishing, boat rentals, the well known 16.5 mile Seneca Creek Greenway Trail. There are other hiking opportunities at the Clopper Lake Day Use Area and Shaeffer Farms Trails. The trails are well maintained, signed and blazed but not heavily used at all. Described here is an easy 7.2 mile "dumbbell" hike featuring views of the lake as well as Seneca Creek.

The hike starts on the red blazed Old Pond Trail just to the left of the Headquarters building.

Trail Notes: Before starting the hike check out the Grusendorf Log House (circa 1855) on the right side of the building. Proceed down the Old Pond trail. In 0.19 miles turn right at a trail junction. Pass the Old Pond (very dry now) with an old bathtub in it. In 0.22 miles enter a power line swath and turn left onto the Great Seneca Trail (blazed orange and teal blue but no sign at this point). (Turning right eventually leads back to your start point. You'll do that later.) Climb a short rocky hill and pass a spur trail on the left that leads to the Chickadee Picnic area (See shelter icon.) In another 0.45 miles cross the access road to the Nuthatch picnic area at the main park road and join the yellow and teal blue Long Draught Tr.

In another 0.65 miles pass the spur trail on the right to the Nuthatch Picnic Area. The white blazed Mink Trail shares the tread here. In 0.15 miles turn left to stay on the Mink Hollow trail. Cross a bridge and then a boardwalk to avoid wet areas around Long Draught. In about 0.4 miles pass the spur for the Pheasant Run Picnic Area. In another 0.18 miles cross the main park road. In 0.19 miles pass the Bob White Picnic Area. At 0.19 miles turn right onto the blue blazed Lake Shore trail. In several places the trail will split into low and high water routes. They always rejoin. (I prefer to stay along the shore as much as possible.) In quick succession you will pass trails on the right for Buck, Doe and Fawn Picnic Areas. The trail raps around a cove after the last one. In 0.51 miles the trail turns left crossing the headwaters of the lake on a culvert paralleling Long Draught Road. Continue to follow the blazes around the lake. In 1.24 miles arrive at the boat rental building (a good break spot). In another 0.22 miles pass a spur to the right and soon walk across a lawn. The low water trail continues straight ahead. The official main trail is a little further up the hill. In 0.27 miles from the last spur pass under the Kingfisher Overlook parking lot and soon arrive at the dam and park road.

Turn right and walk up the park road to the familiar Nuthatch Picnic Area access road you crossed earlier. Retrace your steps on the orange and teal blue blazed Great Seneca Trail to its junction with the red blazed Old Pond Trail. Bear left here, staying on the Great Seneca trail. Descend through a pine grove to the creek itself. In 0.52 miles the Seneca Creek Greenway trail continues straight ahead toward Rt 117. Turn right here, cross a grassy opening and follow the old orange blazed dirt road back to the parking lot.