The Black Hill Trail is mostly an asphalt surface, the mid-section of the trail is natural surface and is steep and rocky in sections. The rest of the trail is paved with concrete and is used by cyclists, hikers, and equestrians. The trail begins at the Visitor Center and winds through the forest, passing by the Little Seneca Dam and the Black Hill Road Bridge. The trail also passes by the Osprey Platform, where you can see the ospreys nesting and feeding on the lake. The trail continues through the forest, passing by the Turtle Pond and the Wood Duck Boxes. The trail ends at the End of Trail sign.

Staley's Boarding House

Unlike The Black Hill Trail, Staley's Boarding House is a old road that follows the Seneca Path, a trail used by Indians of the Seneca Nation in the seventeenth century. It was also used by the B&O Railroad as a main line to Washington, DC. The road was named after a law that was passed in the early 1800's, which allowed trains to pass through the valley. The road was later abandoned due to the construction of the Black Hill Regional Park. Today, the road serves as a trail for hikers and cyclists.

Osprey Platform

The Osprey Platform is a observation area where you can see the ospreys nesting and feeding on the lake. The platform is located near the Seneca Path, and is an excellent place to see the ospreys in action. The platform is accessible by foot, and is a popular spot for bird watchers.

The Dam

The Dam is a beautiful example of early American engineering. It was constructed by the Black Hill maintenance crew, and is the main feature of the park. The dam is a concrete structure that is designed to control the flow of water in the lake. The dam is an excellent example of early American engineering, and is a popular spot for visitors to take pictures.

Wildflowers

Wildflowers are a common sight on the trail. The trail is lined with a variety of wildflowers, including the bluebell, the red-tailed hawk, and the osprey. The trail also passes by a waterfall, which is a popular spot for visitors to take pictures.

Turtles

Turtles are a common sight on the trail. The trail is lined with a variety of turtles, including the red-bellied cooter and the painted turtle. The turtles are a popular sight for visitors, and are often seen sunning themselves on rocks and logs.

THE INVADERS

From mid-June into the fall, you will see a plant similar to ground ivy. This plant has been introduced to the area, and is a common sight on the trail. The plant is a nuisance for the ecosystem, as it outcompetes native plants for sunlight and water.

Wood Duck Boxes

Many of the trees of Little Seneca Lake contain special elevated nest boxes for wood ducks. Wood ducks typically nest in the cavities of trees next to waterways. When forests started to disappear due to development, wood ducks were forced to use the nest boxes. Luckily these nest boxes have been successful, and have helped increase the wood duck population in the area.

Deep Water

The deepest part of Little Seneca Lake is just to your left. It is estimated to be 70 feet deep here! Ask a Park Naturalist: What is Lake Turnover?

Rock Outcrops

Among the rocks of the shoreline you can see black rocks, layered like pages pressed together. This is the local bedrock known as Hylastrite, formed in the Late Precambrian Era, when life emerged from the oceans. You rarely find this rock on the surface of the earth, except in deep stream valleys.

Beaver Lodge

There are numerous active beaver lodges on the lake. You may have noticed pointed stumps and trees missing bark at their bases along the lake shore. These are telltale signs of beaver activity. The entrance to the lodge is underwater. Inside the lodge is an air-filled chamber where the beavers sleep, eat, and raise their young.

Forest of Dead Trees

When the stream valley was flooded to create the lake, many trees were left standing on purpose. These snags provide excellent habitat for creatures such as birds and fish. What do you see around the trees, above and below the watery depths?

That's Weir

The small islands ahead are actually man-made weirs used to control the three branches of the lake to stop the water from flowing. The weir system creates a waterfall into the lake at a curve and traps sediment with underwater rock walls.

Black Hill

The wooded slope on your right is called Black Hill. It acquired its name from a railway that once passed through the valley. The early B&O Railroad trains threw off hot cinders, and one day these cinders started a fire that burned the hill black. According to another story, Black Hill was named after the gold fields of Black Hills, South Dakota. In the late 1800's, a local farmer who had newly discovered gold on his land. The amount of gold in the ore was low, but not low enough to discourage enthusiastic locals, who excavated several open pits. You can see one of these open pits if you walk past the Park Manager's office along the Black Hill Trail.

Eagles

Every fall, a bald eagle family seems to return to a favorite perch of our nesting bald eagles. Since 2006, Black Hill Regional Park has been home to nesting bald eagles and their offspring. Ask a Park Naturalist: Does a bald eagle always have a white head and tail feathers?
**Park Regulations**

- Park in designated areas only.
- Alcoholic beverages are prohibited.
- Pets must be kept on a leash.
- Buses require parking permits and are not allowed in the park on Saturdays, Sundays, or holidays.
- Swimming and wading in the lake is prohibited.
- No motorized vehicles on trails.
- For a complete list of park regulations contact the Park Permit Office or visit ParkPermits.org.

**Black Hill Nature Programs** encourages you to follow Leave No Trace ethics as a way to maintain a healthy environment for the wildlife that live here.

Please do not litter. If you see floating debris or trash along the shore, be a good steward and pick it up. Please do not pick flowers or plants. This disturbs habitat and denies other visitors an opportunity to see the beauty the park has to offer.

The member-driven Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics teaches people how to enjoy the outdoors responsibly. This copyrighted information has been reprinted with permission from the Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics: www.LNT.org

**Black Hill Regional Park**

20930 Lake Ridge Drive | Boyds, Maryland 20841

Park Hours: Black Hill Regional Park is open year round, sunrise to sunset. Contact specific facilities within the park for operating hours.

**M-NCPPC Montgomery Parks**

M-NCPPC Montgomery Parks provides residents and visitors with access to more than 35,000 acres of parkland. Our park system includes a variety of recreational facilities, such as ice rinks, indoor and outdoor tennis courts, athletic fields, event centers, campgrounds, nature centers and public gardens. We are stewards to more than 10% of the County’s land and work hard to preserve a number of beautiful natural areas for walking and viewing the local wildlife. We also offer a wide range of classes and programs for all ages and interests.

MontgomeryParks.org

Parks Matter! Love the Parks? Help Support Them! Visit MontgomeryParksFoundation.org to learn more.

**Three Creeks**

Three creeks—Cabin Branch and Ten Mile—come together to form Little Seneca Lake here in Black Hill Regional Park. Little Seneca Lake was created as a drinking water reservoir by the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission (WSSC). To create the lake, a dam was built on Little Seneca Creek, which flows into Great Seneca Creek and then into the Potomac River. By 1986 the three creeks had completely flooded the stream valley, which once held a farming community. Today, water from the lake is released through the dam as needed to supplement water levels in the Potomac River during times of drought.

The water trail tours all three creeks, which will take approximately three to five hours of paddling. If you do not have the time or endurance to complete the entire trail, please consider enjoying the trail in sections over a course of days. We strongly recommend that you have prior paddling experience before setting out on the trail. Black Hill Nature Programs offers a variety of kayak and canoe lessons and trips to help you gain confidence and experience.

For more information on any of the spots listed on the trail, please visit the Black Hill Visitor Center. A Park Naturalist will be happy to answer your questions.

**Have a great paddle!**