

The Newark Watershed

Guide to Trails



35,000 acres of trails, mountains, ponds, streams and reservoirs



The Newark Watershed Guide is intended to be a living document, updated regularly to reflect new information and trail improvements on the ground. The date of the last update can be seen in each page's footer.

Have you noticed missing or outdated information in this guide? When walking the trail, have you seen problems with the trail's condition or maintenance?

Let us know! Email info@nynjtc.org with "Newark Watershed Guide" in the subject line to share your knowledge. Our organization is built on the dedicated efforts of volunteers, and we welcome your involvement.

Happy exploring,

-The New York-New Jersey Trail Conference

The Newark Watershed Trails are maintained by volunteers of the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference in conjunction with the City of Newark

About the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference



The New York-New Jersey Trail Conference has partnered with parks to create, protect, and promote a network of over 2,100 miles of public trails in the New York-New Jersey metropolitan region.

The Trail Conference organizes volunteer service projects that keep these trails open, safe, and enjoyable for the public. We publish maps and books that guide public use of these trails.

The Trail Conference is a nonprofit organization with a membership of 10,000 individuals and 100 clubs that have a combined membership of over 100,000 active, outdoor-loving people.

About the City of Newark



The City of Newark, located in Essex County, is the most populous city in New Jersey with over 300,000 residents. Newark is also one of the oldest cities in the United States, settled in 1666.

The city boasts a diverse cultural, economic, and historical heritage. A cosmopolitan city, Newark prides itself on its performing arts centers, museums, music, and festivals. Newark is also powerhouse commercial hub, and historically one of the busiest on the East Coast.

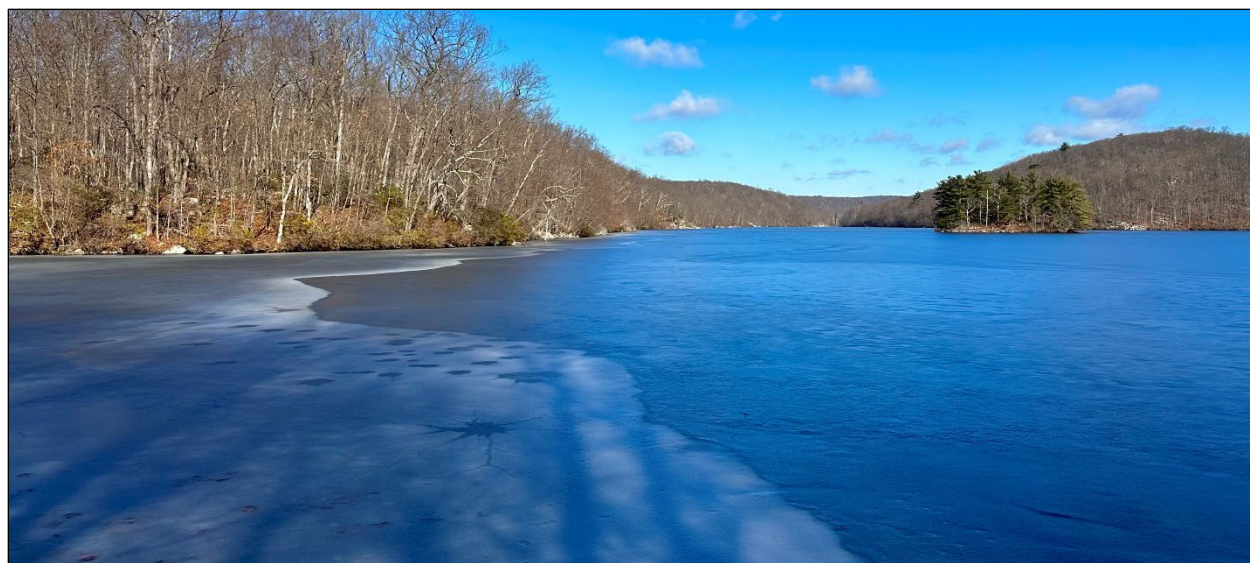


Photo Credit: Nick McKenna

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The Newark Watershed

“...in the Pequannock watershed one of the most beautiful parks in the whole Eastern United States, a park in which the natural beauties of this rugged country will be maintained”¹

The Newark Watershed, also called the Pequannock Watershed, is a source of drinking water that was born out of necessity. The City of Newark grew rapidly in the 1800's, and with it a demand for clean drinking water. Millions of dollars at the time, which today would be worth roughly a quarter of a billion dollars, were used by the City of Newark to purchase watershed land over the course of a decade. By 1900 the city had purchased the 35,000 acres we now know.



Starting at the Hamburg Mountains in Sussex County, the Pequannock River is the true source of the Newark Watershed. A network of lakes and reservoirs connected by streams all flow into the Pequannock River, eventually flowing into the Pompton River. After Charlotteburg Reservoir, the Pequannock River flows into the small Macopin Reservoir. From there, two large aqueduct pipes carry treated drinking water to the City of Newark, running underground through Butler, Wayne, Clifton, Bloomfield, and all the towns between.

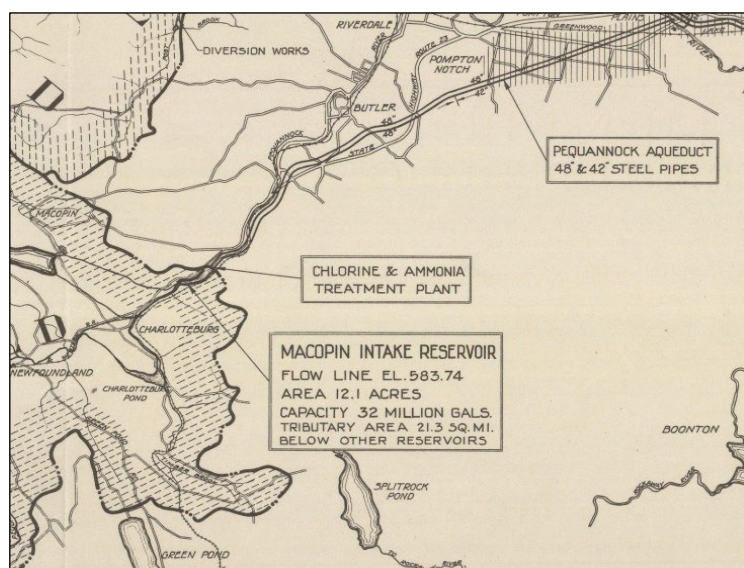
The Watershed, which is contained within six municipalities and three counties, has remained unchanged in its beauty from its first acquisition more than a hundred years ago. In the late 1800's, the land was known for being sparsely inhabited and rugged, however several small towns were impacted by the creation of the reservoirs. Pastures were more common but have since been reforested thanks to community efforts in the early 1900's, and efforts from the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930's. Today, the area is highlighted by its numerous bodies of water, hills, and forests – just as back then.

A byproduct of protected natural resource land is the preservation of biodiversity. Because this watershed is used by the City of Newark for drinking water, the forests and hills remain minimally disturbed. Bears, foxes, deer, many species of birds, and fish all native to New Jersey, live within the Watershed. With the

encroachment on native habitats by human development elsewhere in the state, the Newark Watershed remains as one of the natural beauties of the Eastern United States.

Hunting, fishing, horseback riding, and hiking are available in the Watershed. Permits are required for these forms of recreation, with a discount for Newark residents.

The land of the Newark Watershed is welcome to everyone and should be enjoyed responsibly. When overlooking one of the many reservoirs while out hiking, recognize this is one piece of a large system, just as each of us are.



Inset of the Macopin Intake Reservoir and Aqueduct. Newark DPW, Watershed Map 1946

¹ The Lewis Historical Publishing Co, "A History of the City of Newark, New Jersey," 866.

The Value of Land Preservation for Clean Water and a Healthy Environment

The Newark Watershed, with its pristine lakes and well-preserved natural environment, plays a crucial role in providing clean water and thus maintaining a healthy ecosystem. The value of this watershed extends far beyond its immediate geographical boundaries, impacting both the local community and the broader region.

First and foremost, the Newark Watershed serves as a vital source of drinking water for the residents of Newark and its surrounding areas. As an incredibly important natural resource, the land is protected. The byproduct of the stringent land protection regulations is a land that retains its biodiversity. This, however, doesn't mean the land hasn't been altered by human development. The reservoirs were created by people blocking the flow of the Pequannock River, thereby creating a vast pool of available drinking water for the people of northern New Jersey. Before that, farmers had cleared forest to build pastures, and towns were situated along the Pequannock River. The Lenape people farmed, hunted and gathered, and altered the land before the European colonists.

Understanding how the land has been altered by humans can help us preserve the natural biodiversity of a place, and to keep our natural resources unpolluted. If a place is constantly disturbed, there is an opportunity for invasive species to move in, and for endangered and native species to become extirpated. That is why minimally impacting land is so important, it allows for the native plants and animals to continue their cycles undisturbed. Our natural resources, and the ecosystem, are a system forever tied together. The land is constantly changing – but the value of preserving our land is higher than ever.



A beautiful watershed trail

The Highlands Water Protection and Planning Act was created in 2004 with the goal of protecting watersheds and biodiversity in Northwest New Jersey. As a Highlands Preservation Area, the Newark Watershed is protected from development that would negatively impact the water quality and fragment the forest further. Protecting water resources at the source is vital for everybody, and the City of Newark along with the Highlands Act has been able to do that.

In essence, the Newark Watershed stands as a testament to the interconnectedness of clean water, a healthy environment, and the well-being of communities. Its value extends from the faucets in households to the recreational spaces that promote physical and mental health, emphasizing the need for responsible stewardship and sustainable practices to ensure the continued provision of clean water and the preservation of this invaluable natural resource.



The Lenape People

The Lenape (English: Len-nah-pay) people lived on the lands around the Newark Watershed long before European settlers arrived and displaced them. They are also sometimes called the Leni Lenape or Delaware Indians, because of their communities in the Delaware River Basin. The Lenape people's historical territory includes present-day New Jersey and eastern Pennsylvania along the Delaware River watershed, New York City, western Long Island, and the Lower Hudson Valley. This area was referred to as "Lenapehoking" by the Lenape.

Starting with the so-called purchase of Manhattan in 1626, the Lenape and other native communities in the New York–New Jersey area were forced or coaxed into signing a series of massive land agreements, many with conflicting boundaries and fraudulent residual rights for hunting and other use. The Walking Purchase of 1737 alone claimed 1,200,000 acres of Lenape land in Pennsylvania along the Delaware including where the Appalachian Trail now crosses. Their lands taken from them, the Lenape were largely forced to move to Ohio, Canada, Wisconsin, Oklahoma and other areas. The French-Indian War, the American Revolution, inter-tribal warfare with the Iroquois, and the scourge of smallpox also decimated many tribal communities.



Map of Lenapehoking and Lenape languages spoken in the New York-New Jersey area. Credit: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lenape#/media/File:Lenape_Languages.png

Today, Lenape people belong to the Delaware Nation and Delaware Tribe of Indians in Oklahoma; the Stockbridge-Munsee Community in Wisconsin; and the Munsee-Delaware Nation, Moravian of the Thames First Nation, and Delaware of Six Nations in Ontario. The name "Delaware" comes from British military officer Thomas West, who carried the family title Lord De La Warr and was known for his brutal campaigns against the Irish and later against the Lenape and other tribes. West served as a governor and military leader in Virginia in the early 1600s.

Although the Lenape were forced from their homes, time has not erased the proof of their presence all through the New York–New Jersey region. Their words remain embedded in our geography, including examples such as Manhattan (or Mana-hatta), Hackensack, Allamuchy, Kittatinny, Lake Hopatcong, Ho-Ho-Kus, Cupsaw Lake, Ramapo, Cheesequake, and many more.

While most were forced into displacement, some Lenape descendants remained in New York and New Jersey. This includes members of the Ramapough Lenape, who often intermarried with other communities and are working to hold on to as much of their heritage as possible in spite of ongoing assaults on their lands, language and culture. To this day the Ramapough and other Lenape communities in the United States and Canada continue to explore their history and find ways to celebrate and protect their culture.

To learn more visit LenapeLifeways.org, managed by Lenape Lifeways Educational Programs, Inc. This not-for-profit organization focuses on New Jersey's first people - The Lenape - and is dedicated to the preservation and interpretation of the prehistory of New Jersey and the surrounding region.

Natural History

Plants

The Newark Watershed features plant life typical of northeastern glaciated highlands with a temperate broadleaf and mixed forests ecoregion. The region is special in that it contains large contiguous tracts of forests and wetlands. Stands of oak, hickory, maple, birch, pine, and beech trees make up much of the woodland within the Newark Watershed. Mid- to late-spring rewards hikers with mountain laurel and rhododendron blooms along some of the trails. Along the water's edge, cattails and bulrushes stand tall, their presence defining the wetland areas. Mushrooms and ephemerals emerge throughout the year in the dark reaches of the woods, waiting to be found. In autumn, the foliage paints the landscape in warm hues, providing a breathtaking backdrop.



Mountain laurel blooms

Animals

Northeastern highlands forests teem with wildlife. White-tailed deer, black bears, eastern gray squirrels, chipmunks, garter snakes, woodchucks, beavers, and raccoons are all common. Lucky and keen-eyed hikers may be able to spot water snakes, black rat snakes, salamanders, snapping turtles, box turtles, or red fox along the trail. Birdwatchers are constantly treated to warblers, sparrows, cardinals, goldfinches, and other songbirds, while spring and fall draw migratory raptors. Endangered animals, like the Northern Goshawk and American Bittern are protected within the watershed. When hiking by ponds and waterways, long-necked egrets and great blue herons can often be seen hunting for frogs and fish to eat. Keep an eye out for the elusive barred owl, a nocturnal hunter whose call is often heard echoing through the night.



Black bear - a common sight

Geology

This rugged topography was carved by numerous glacial periods, with the last being about 21,000 years ago. Each glacial event covered the land in thick ice sheets, which carved out the many valleys typical to Northeast New Jersey. Exposed bedrock, boulders, and glacial till make up much of the rock you'll see while hiking. The many serene ponds and rivers that lay among the hills and valleys of the watershed are the direct result of the glaciated topography. The residents that live around the Watershed use wells fed by aquifers, an important geologic byproduct that must be conserved. Without the Pequannock River flowing out of the Hamburg Mountains, there would be no Newark Watershed.

How to Access the Newark Watershed

Parking and hiking in the Newark Watershed is by permit only and requires payment. Permits are required for all parking areas on Watershed lands, including parking areas identified P1 to P9 on the Watershed map (map 153). P7, which is not on Watershed land, still requires a permit when hiking.

Permits may be obtained:

- Online at <https://www.newarknj.gov/card/recreational-permit>
- In person (on weekdays) from its Echo Lake Office, at 223 Echo Lake Rd, West Milford, NJ
- By mail at PO Box 319 Newfoundland, NJ, 07435
- By phone at (973-697-1724).
- Alternatively, permits can be issued at 920 Broad St, Room 211, Newark, N.J. 07102



Public transportation from Newark is limited to bus routes to Rt.23, stops at Oak Ridge Road and St. John's Church allow for closest access to the Watershed – from Oak Ridge Road to parking areas around Clinton Reservoir is anywhere from 2.2 – 4 miles walking distance



Photo Credit: Nick McKenna, and for cover photo

Map Resources

Multiple map resources are available to help you explore, so choose the options that work best for you.

1. **Print or View Guide Maps:** The maps in this guide can be printed or viewed on your mobile device. These maps are provided for general reference, but it is also recommended that you obtain a separate detailed topographic map as described below.
2. **Download digital Avenza Maps app maps:** Detailed maps from the Trail Conference covering the Newark Watershed are available for use on mobile devices through the Avenza Maps app.



Avenza Maps is available on Apple and Android devices, and the app allows you to pinpoint your location with GPS accuracy, track your route, and safely navigate the trails of the watershed, even if you lose cell coverage. More than 350,000 digital Trail Conference maps have been downloaded through the app and enjoyed by trail users. To learn more about the app, visit <https://store.nynjtc.org/pages/digital-trail-maps-on-mobile-devices>.

Two different maps cover the watershed lands. First download the Avenza Maps app from your device's app store, and then click on each of the following links or search the map store within the app for the map title:

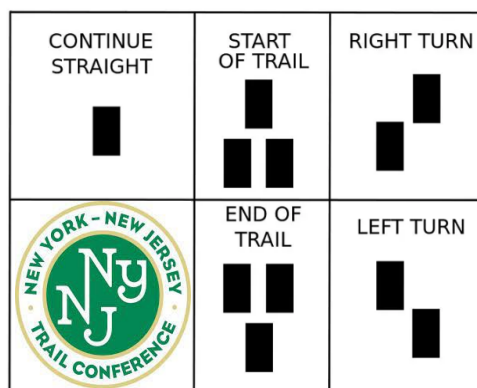
- [Northern New Jersey Highlands Map 153](#)
 - [Morris County Highlands Map 125](#)
3. **Waterproof print maps:** These detailed topographic maps are also available on waterproof, tear-resistant Tyvek. Learn more about our [Northern New Jersey Highlands Trails map](#) and [Morris County Highlands Trails map](#) at <https://store.nynjtc.org>.

Prepare for Your Outing

The Newark Watershed provides dozens of miles of hiking trails for visitors to explore. What ties these trails together are the distinctive trail markings called “blazes”. Following these blazes will keep you on the trail and give you a heads-up when the path is about to take a turn so that you don’t miss it.

Take a look at the diagram to the right to see how to follow these trail blazes. While you may have to look hard for them at first, following them will quickly become second nature.

Hunting is allowed in some areas with trails, the back of map 153 includes a paragraph about hunting cautions.



Leave No Trace & Packing Essentials

The “**Ten Essentials**” are a packing list that will help you be prepared no matter the adventure, whether you’re going for a day hike, a weekend getaway, or an overnight campout. These items are intended to help you reduce your impacts on the natural world, while also keeping you safe in any sort of emergency

Hiking Boots or Athletic Shoes: Make sure to choose footwear that can handle uneven surfaces and long walks while protecting your toes and ankles. Boots are ideal, but any old pair of sneakers will do just fine.

Water: Always carry water with you, even if you don’t think you’re going far enough to need it. While it will differ by person, a good rule of thumb is to bring one liter (standard Nalgene bottle) for every two hours you plan on being out. Bring more if it’s hot weather!

Navigation: The Avenza Maps app described in this guide is a great tool, but you should never rely on a digital map alone – phones can lose power, and you don’t want to be left not knowing where you are. Consider printing the map pages you’ll need from this guide and bringing them along on your walk.

Food: Depending on the length of your trip, pack a sandwich, trail mix, fruit, seeds, or chocolate for when you get hungry.

Rain Gear and Extra Clothing: Be prepared for changing weather, even if it’s not in the forecast. Take a light rain jacket and sweater if there’s any chance of getting wet or chilly.

First Aid Kit: This can be as simple as a few band-aids and tube of antibiotic ointment in a baggie to handle any scrapes or pokes. If you plan on being out often, you can also buy small pre-packed first aid kits at your local pharmacy.

Headlamp or Flashlight: While you should always plan to be out of any wooded parks by sunset, it never hurts to carry a small flashlight just in case you’re running behind schedule.

Sunscreen and Insect Repellent: Apply regularly to protect yourself even on cloudy days. A minimum of SPF 30 is recommended.

To become an even more responsible park user, you can learn more about the seven principles of Leave No Trace at www.lnt.org/why/7-principles

The Highlands Trail

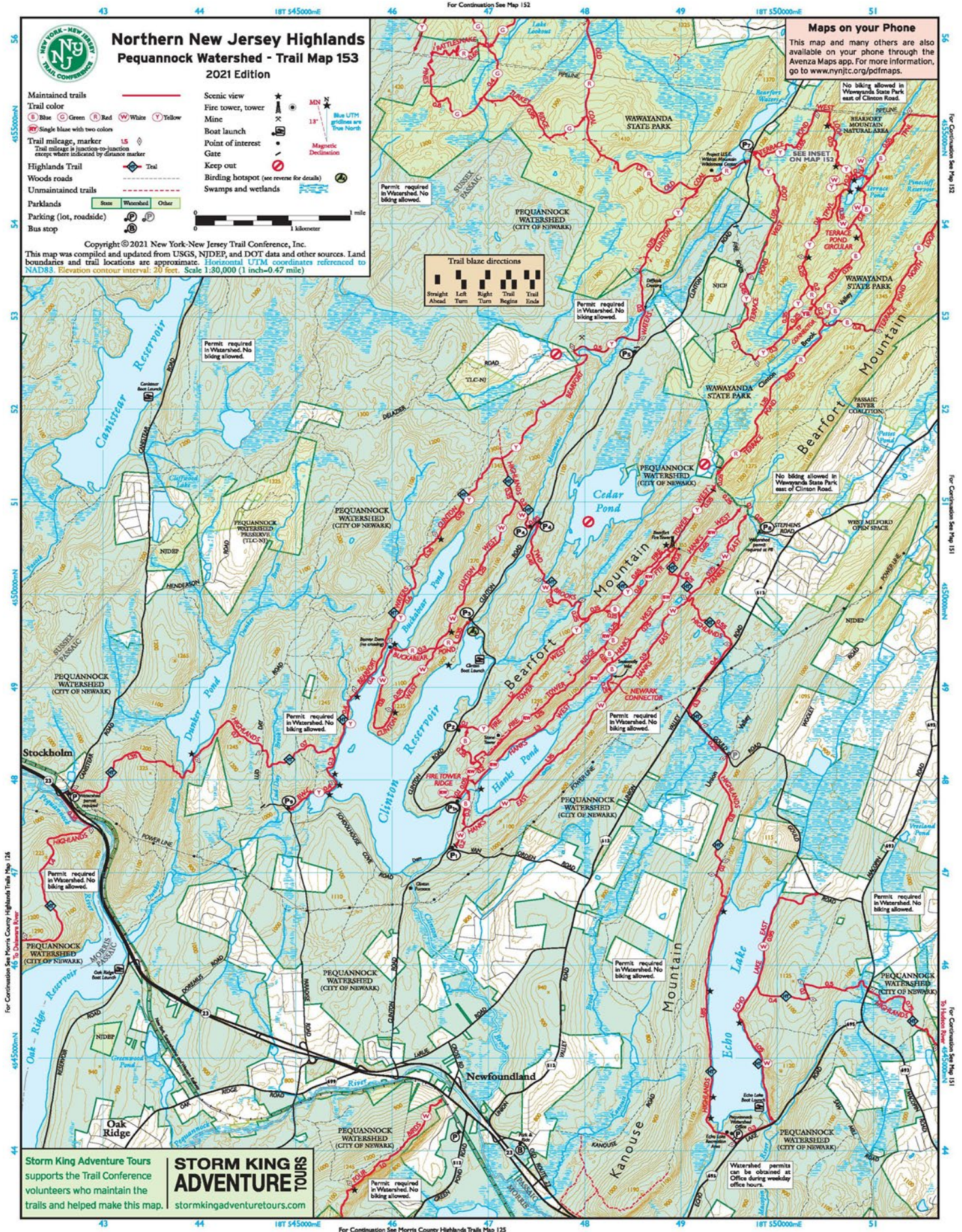
The first section of the Highlands Trail opened at Echo Lake, within the Newark Watershed!

The New Jersey Highlands Region is an area of 859,358 acres located in the northwest part of the State. It spans 88 municipalities and portions of seven counties – Bergen, Hunterdon, Morris, Passaic, Somerset, Sussex, and Warren. It offers stunning vistas of an ancient landscape and serves as a vital source of drinking water for almost 70% of New Jersey residents.

Noted for its scenic beauty and environmental significance, the Region displays myriad geographic and geologic features, including rolling hills, pastoral valleys, steep ridges, diverse forests, and critical wildlife habitats. It encompasses a broad array of land uses and activities with rural communities, former mill towns, suburban neighborhoods, and urbanized centers all located within short distances of each other. This combination of natural beauty and interconnected communities makes the Region uniquely suited for a long-distance trail, where visitors can enjoy an uninterrupted hiking experience of over 130 miles of trail in New Jersey. The Highlands Trail extends over 150 miles to connect the Delaware and Hudson Rivers, continuing beyond both into Pennsylvania and Connecticut. It showcases the natural beauty of the local Highlands Region and connects local communities with the incredible recreational opportunities in their own backyards.

The Highlands Trail is built and maintained by partnerships between public land managers, the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference, and people just like you. The Highlands Water Protection and Planning Council (Highlands Council) is a regional planning agency that encourages a comprehensive approach to implementing the 2004 Highlands Water Protection and Planning Act, ensuring the Region is protected for the benefit of all New Jersey residents. Find free maps and information about getting involved as a trail volunteer at TheHighlandsTrail.org





The following hikes are not an exhaustive list of all possible combinations of routes, rather they are a good starting point for hiking in the Newark Watershed. This document may be updated in the future with more hikes, and as trails change.

Loop Hike from Parking Area P2 3.8 Miles Round-Trip

Begin this hike by parking in parking area P2 (41.086785, -74.444145) off Clinton Road. From here you will begin by briefly following the Yellow blazes (Y) before making a hard right turn onto the Blue connector trail. After turning right and following the Blue trail (B) for 0.35 miles, you will come to an intersection with the Red-White trail (RW). To continue clockwise, make a left and continue to follow the Red-White blazes of the Fire Tower Ridge trail along Bearfort Mountain. This rocky ridge boasts a rugged charm, scattered with resilient plant life. Hardy pines, oaks and ferns cling to the weathered stones while patches of vibrant moss add a touch of green to the rocky landscape.

After following the Red-White blazes for 1.25 miles, you will make a hard right downhill onto another Blue connector trail. Follow the Blue blazes (B) down the rocky slope for 0.15 miles before connecting with the Blue-White Trail (BW) at



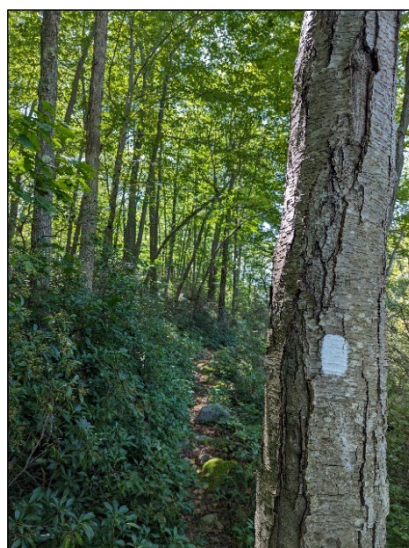
the bottom of the hill. After turning right onto Blue-White, follow the trail for 1.3 miles through dense forest past Hanks Pond, which provides a number of opportunities to step out to the shore for a grand view. From there, you will reconnect with the Red-White trail. After turning right on Red-White, you'll make a left back on the Blue connector trail, which will lead to the Yellow Trail where you began.



Views of Hanks Pond – from above and shoreline

Loop Hike from Parking Area P3 2.4 Miles Round-Trip

Begin this hike by parking in parking area P3 off Clinton Road. (41.097433, -74.442449). Begin down the trail, following the Red blazes (R) for 0.35 miles until coming to a 4-way intersection with the White Trail. To continue clockwise, make a left turn at this intersection and follow the Clinton West trail's white blazes (W) for 1.35 miles. This will lead you over the rocky summit of the peninsula, boasting beautiful views of the Clinton Reservoir. As you trek along the trail, the melodic call of songbirds provides a natural soundtrack. Near the water's edge, painted turtles bask in the sun, and the occasional splash from a frog interrupts the calming nature of the landscape. After following the White Trail to its end, you will reconnect with the Red Trail at Buckabear Pond. Turn right and follow the Red blazes (R) straight through the intersection with the White Trail and back to parking area P3. The trails offer a mix of challenges, from gentle slopes to more rugged terrain, accommodating both casual strollers and avid hikers.



Loop Hike from Parking Area P8 2.6 Miles Round-Trip

Begin this hike by parking in parking area P8 off Stephens Road. Begin hiking up the access road behind the gate and continue for 0.15 miles. The road is smooth, and the incline is gradual. To continue clockwise, turn left onto the White Trail (W), also known as “Hanks East”.

Continue following the White blazes for 0.75 miles while enjoying picturesque views along the ridge. You will then come to the Teal Diamond blaze of the Highlands Trail. Make a hard right and continue up the trail past the intersection of the Blue-White Trail (BW), and steeply up the rocky slope towards the Bearfort Fire Tower.

Once you reach the top, you will be able to see the Fire Tower, which stands tall over views of surrounding lakes, valleys, and seemingly endless stretches of greenery. Make a right turn onto the Yellow Trail (Y), also known as “Fire Tower West”, and continue 0.55 miles as you meander through dense woodlands and past scenic vistas. You will then meet up again with the wide access road, which you will follow back down for 0.5 miles back to parking area P8 where you began.



Get Involved

VOLUNTEER TO PROTECT THE LAND YOU LOVE

The New York-New Jersey Trail Conference is a volunteer-powered nonprofit organization caring for public lands and trails. Our passion is helping people responsibly enjoy the benefits of being outdoors.

When underfunded park agencies require resources for vital needs such as trail maintenance, habitat restoration, and visitor education, the Trail Conference jumps into action. Since 1920, we have brought our expertise and ability to find sustainable, on-the-ground solutions to land managers throughout the greater New York metropolitan region.

By partnering with these agencies and engaging the public, the Trail Conference preserves the integrity of trails and natural areas and inspires a deeper appreciation for the care that these special places require.

With your help, we can continue to keep trails and the lands they traverse open and safe for another century – and beyond.



Give Back...

...On a Trail

- Adopt and Care for a Trail Section
- Join a Trail Crew

...In a Park

- Educate the Public as a Trail Steward

...In a Workshop

- Learn How to Care for the Land and Trails

...Behind the Scenes

- Support Wilderness Preservation
- Greet Visitors at Our Headquarters
- Boost Our Fundraising and Outreach Efforts
- Help Plan Events
- Join a Committee

...As a Company

- Get Your Colleagues Outside for a Day of Service

Reach out for more information: nynjtc.org/volunteer | 201.512.9348 | volunteer@nynjtc.org



Resources

Learn More

New Jersey Audubon offers bird walks, field trips, workshops, migration watches, and more. If you're looking to learn more about the natural world, particularly the feathered friends that you share the Newark Watershed with, take a look at their website: <https://njudubon.org/gobirding/>.

Experience the Trail with Others

Regular volunteer opportunities are available to meet like-minded local trail enthusiasts and give back to the parks you all enjoy. Email volunteer@nynjtc.org to connect with a crew... beginners are welcome!

Your Resources

Do you know of an organization that would be an asset to trail users and should be included in this guide? Let us know! Email info@nynjtc.org with "Newark Watershed Guide" in the subject line to share your knowledge. This guide is a living document, and we look forward to continuing to improve it.

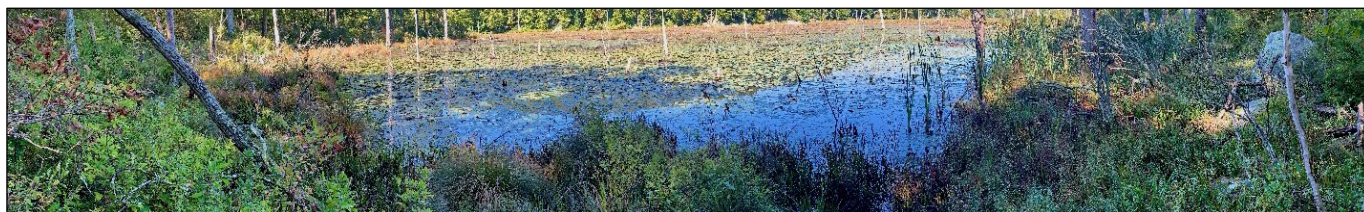
Web Links

In addition to the many people who came together to make this guide possible, dozens of valuable online sources were referenced.

Connecting Trails

Highlands Trail

- <https://www.nynjtc.org/ldt-highlands-trail/>



Acknowledgments

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Thank you to New York – New Jersey Trail Conference staff, Nick McKenna for pictures, input from Daniel Chazin, the City of Newark, and to the many volunteers who keep our trails maintained.

Happy exploring,

Patrick Erb
New Jersey Program Coordinator
New York-New Jersey Trail Conference

