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 natural surface and is used by Indians of the Seneca Nation in the seventeenth century.

**SILOS**
Looking across the lake through the trees, you will see two silos. The land around them was for dairy farming. Up until the 1940’s, farmers would deliver their milk just to one of the B&O railroad stops to meet the trains on their way to Washington, DC. Today the farm serves as a station for the Park Police Mounted unit and their horses.

**WILDFLOWERS**
Different kinds of wildflowers grow around the lake. Can you find them?

**OSPREY PLATFORM**
Osprey can be seen flying and fishing around the lake in the spring, summer, and fall. This nesting platform was constructed by the Black Hill maintenance crew. Man-made platforms are proven to help increase osprey population numbers, which have been affected by pesticide use and habitat loss. Ask a Park Naturalist: How does an osprey carry a fish?

**THE INVADERS**
From mid-June into the fall, you will see a plant similar to seaweed growing underwater in the shallow parts of the lake. This is hydrilla, an exotic plant from Asia that was used in fish aquariums. It escaped and now under the lake was used for dairy farming. Up until the 1940’s, farmers would deliver their milk just to one of the B&O railroad stops to meet the trains on their way to Washington, DC. Today the farm serves as a station for the Park Police Mounted unit and their horses.

**WOOD DUCK BOXES**
Some of the coves of Little Seneca Lake contain special elevated nest boxes for wood ducks. Wood ducks typically nest in the cavities of trees near to waterways. When forests started to disappear due to development, we installed the wood duck boxes. Luckily these man-made boxes help fledge 78 to 100 wood ducks on the lake every year.

**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: Why is Lake Turnover?

**TURTLES**
Red-bellied cooters and the smaller painted turtles like to bask on logs in this cove. On sunny days, hundreds of these solitary creatures come together, sometimes piled on top of each other like checkers, to warm their muscles and raise their body temperatures so that they can digest their food.

**THE DAM**
Water will be released at different levels from the dam to control the amount of water in the lake for different purposes. In the summer, dam operators release warm water from the lake bottom so that trout can live downstream in Little Seneca Creek.

**THAT'S WEIR**
Water Trail

**THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION**

**BLACK HILL**
The wooded slope on your right is called Black Hill. The hill acquired its name from a blaze left before the safety of the last rays. 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 Hill, South Dakota. In the late 1800’s, a local farmer mined gold newly discovered gold on their 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**
Are you looking for a bald eagle? This is a favorite perch of our roadside bald eagles. Since 2006, Black Hill Regional Park has been home to nesting bald eagles and their offspring.

**ROCK OUTCROPS**
Along the sides of the channel you can see bluish rocks, layered like pages pressed together. This is the local bedrock, known as Hunting Creek, formed in the late Precambrian Era, 2 billion years ago. Look for fossils of crustaceans and jellyfish in the rocks.

**BEAVER LODGE**
There are numerous active beaver lodges on the lake. You may have noticed pointed stamps and trees missing bark at other lakes along the lake shore. These are tell-tale signs of beaver activity. The entrance to the lodge is underwater. Inside the lodge is an air-filled chamber where the beaver strip, eat, and raise their young.

**FOREST OF DEAD TREES**
When the stream valley was flooded to create the lake, many trees were left standing up purpose. These snags provide an 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 in 1970 to keep three branches of the lake to keep the water clean. The weir system causes water to enter into the lake at a slower pace and helps settle with underwater rock walls.

**TREES**
The trees along the lake shore act like buffers, protecting the lake from erosion and nutrient runoff from fertilizers.

**STALEY’S BOARDING HOUSE**
If you look carefully into the brush, you can see the foundations of Staley’s Boarding House, owned by Fleet and Mary Jane Staley in the late 1800’s. After the B&O Railroad’s Metropolitan Branch opened for passenger service in 1873, visitors from Washington D.C. began coming to Bois to hunt in the summertime to enjoy a healthy vacation in the country. When the visitors returned to Washington, they would take containers of clear spring water with them.

**TILES**
Tell a Park Naturalist: Does a Bald eagle always have a white head and tail feathers?

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Three Creeks, Little Seneca, 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 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.

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.

You can visit three creeks, Little Seneca, Cabin Branch and Ten Mile, which all flow into Little Seneca Lake. 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 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.

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There are several indigenous plants and fish species found in the lake, such as Persimmon, Painted Turtle, Black-4; and invasive species like Carp and Hydrilla. The lake is also home to Bald Eagles, American Water Willow, and Painted Turtles. 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.

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