

Hiking the Little River Community Trail, Belfast

(South to North, from Rt. 1 to Rt. 52)

(See page 2 for North to South)

Difficulty: moderate

Distance: Total is 4 miles one way. (Section 1 is 1 mile. Section 2 is 3 miles.)

Hiking time: Total 3 hours. (Section 1 is 45 minutes. Section 2 is 2 hours 15 minutes.)

Vertical rise: 400 feet, but terrain is rugged with gully crossings.

Maps: Main Atlas and Gazetteer, map 14, B4

Directions: From the US1 and ME 52 traffic light in Belfast, drive US 1 south 2.4 miles, and turn right into the Belfast Water District. Park at the back of the lot (sign) where the trail starts at a kiosk, the trail follows blue blazes one mile to the Perkins Road, crosses, and continues 3 miles to Rt. 52 at the Walsh Ball Fields, diagonally across the street from the YMCA. The trail can be hiked as two separate hikes or as one.

This is a good trail to hike, cross-country ski, or snowshoe. In any season it is a gem, and its location right in town makes it easy to get to. The two reservoirs and the Little River are picturesque, peaceful, and hospitable to wildlife.

The Hike: Before leaving the Water District parking lot, have a look at the Lower Reservoir. Many species of waterfowl live and feed around its margins. The trail skirts its north shore under tall white pines, and as the reservoir narrows into the river, the trail ascends and descends hilly terrain. The mature woods are populated by nesting songbirds in spring and summer, and offer habitat for resident winter birds. After a mile, the trail comes out to the Perkins Road at a large hayfield. You can turn back or proceed forward.

To keep going, turn left walk 20 yards, and cross the Perkins Road to the dam and the next section of the trail around the Upper Reservoir. The trail begins at three big rocks which prevent vehicles to enter, and follows blue blazes along the water's edge. The reservoir gradually narrows to the Little River's original stream, and continues through mixed forest with some huge hemlocks. At 1.7 miles, the trail passes a big boulder beside the river. The newest section of the trail continues from here another 1.3 miles to ME 52. If you parked a car at the Walsh Ball Fields, your total distance is 4 miles one way.

To access the trail from the Perkins Road: From the US 1 and ME 52 traffic light, drive US 1 south 2 miles to the Perkins Road, turn right and go 0.7 mile to the junction with Lower Congress Street. Park on the left shoulder. (1) You can hike the Lower Reservoir trail (to US1) by backtracking east 20 yards to the edge of a hay field. You will pass a utility pole with a blue blaze, and then turn right (south) onto the trail marked by blue flagging tape. The trail parallels the Little River downstream for a mile to the Belfast Water District building on US 1.

(2) Or you can hike the Upper Reservoir trail by crossing the road to the reservoir dam. Walk onto the trail past three boulders, and follow blue blazes around the shore of the Upper Reservoir and then up the Little River, either returning the same way or hiking on to ME 52.

Belfast Bay Watershed Coalition, P.O. Box 152, Belfast, ME 04915

Hiking the Little River Community Trail, Belfast

(North to South, from Rt. 52 to Rt. 1)

Difficulty: moderate

Distance: Total is 4 miles one way. (ME 52 to Perkins Rd. 3 miles. Perkins Rd to Water District on US 1 is 1 mile.)

Hiking time: Total 3 hours. (2 hours 15 minutes; 45 minutes.)

Vertical rise: 400 feet, but terrain is rugged with gully crossings.

Maps: Main Atlas and Gazetteer, map 14, B4

Directions: Starting at the Walsh Ball Fields on ME 52 (200 yards SW from the ME 52/US1 traffic light) in Belfast, the Little River Community Trail runs four miles to the Belfast Water District on US 1. Park low in the Walsh Ball Field Parking lot where the trail starts at a kiosk. From here, the trail follows blue blazes 1.3 miles to a huge boulder on the Little River, where it continues on the older trail. Follow the blue blazes another 1.7 miles to the Perkins Road. The trail crosses the road, jogs left a few yards, and turns right at a blue-blazed utility pole into a hay field. From here it is just under a mile to the Water District.

The trail can also be hiked as two separate hikes. To spot a car at the Water District, drive 2.4 miles south on US 1 from the US 1/ME 52 light in Belfast. The Water District is on your right, and parking is in the back at a trail sign. To spot a car at the Perkins Road, drive 2 miles south on US 1 from the same traffic light, and turn right onto the Perkins Road. Go 0.7 mile to Lower Congress Street and park on the left by the river.

This is a good trail to hike, cross-country ski, or snowshoe. In any season it is a gem, and its location right in town makes it easy to get to. The two reservoirs and the Little River are picturesque, peaceful, and hospitable to wildlife.

The Hike: Starting from Walsh Ball Fields, the trail crosses a meadow where bobolinks nest in spring and summer. Just before the trail enters the woods, a small wetland is home to alder flycatchers and common yellowthroats. The trail follows blue blazes, and crosses a brook in an area rife with glossy buckthorn, an invasive species seen here and elsewhere along the trail. The next half-mile takes you through a boggy wonderland of several species of Sphagnum and other mosses. Listen for warblers, vireos, hermit thrushes, veeries, and Easter wood peewees in the forest. When the trail opens into cutover areas, listen for Easter towhees and olive-sided flycatchers, and watch for evidence of moose. At 1.3 miles, you will see a huge boulder on the shore of the Little River.

From here it is 1.7 miles through large old hemlocks along the Little River. The river widens into the Upper Reservoir, which is held by a dam at the Perkins Road. Before leaving the Upper Reservoir, have a look at birds on and above the water. Many species of waterfowl live and feed around its margins.

The trail then crosses the Perkins Road, turns left for a few yards, and turns right at a utility pole with a blue blaze, along the edge between the river and a meadow of Little River Farm. Bobolinks, savannah sparrows, and red-winged blackbirds nest in the meadow. The trail then enters the woods and follows the north shore of the river under tall white pines, and as the river widens into the Lower Reservoir, the trail ascends and descends hilly terrain. The mature woods are populated by nesting warblers and thrushes in spring and summer, and offer habitat for resident winter birds. A mile from the Perkins Road, the trail ends at the Belfast Water District on US 1. Before leaving, have a long look at the Upper Reservoir. Many species of water birds feed and nest on the pond and around its edges. Turtles, minks, and other animals also enjoy this habitat.