

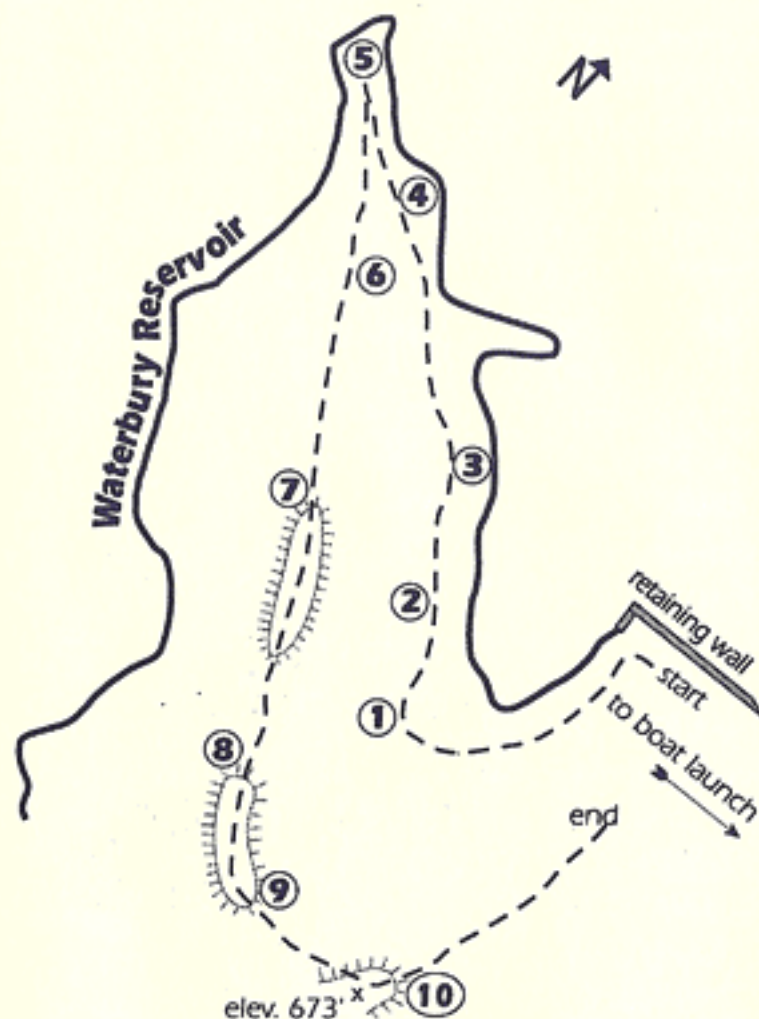
# Peninsula Nature Trail



## Waterbury Center State Park

Vermont Agency of Natural Resources  
Department of Forests,  
Parks, and Recreation

### Peninsula Map



Thanks for walking the  
Peninsula Nature Trail!



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*Welcome to the Peninsula Nature Trail at Waterbury Center State Park, highlighting the natural history, geology and cultural history along the shore of Waterbury Reservoir. Numbered posts along the trail correspond to the numbers in this pamphlet.*

*The trail is approximately 1/2 mile long, a leisurely 30 minute walk. Please leave everything as you found it for the enjoyment of others, including plants and trees. Please return this guide for others to use if you do not wish to keep it.*

### **1. Apple Trees and Old Farms**

The small trees you see here are apple trees. You'll see many of them along the trail and surrounding Waterbury Reservoir. Although common throughout Vermont, apple trees are not native to North America. These trees once belonged to a farm orchard. The farm is long gone, but the fruit of its orchard serves a variety of birds and mammals as an important food source.



Apple tree

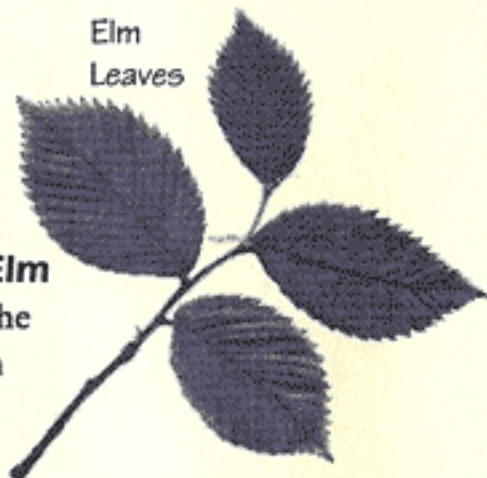
### **2. Waterbury Reservoir**

Where today you see the 860 acre reservoir, at the beginning of the 20th century you would have seen a pastoral landscape, complete with dusty roads winding through sheep pastures ending at tranquil farms. The roads and farms

are all gone now, removed or flooded when the dam at Waterbury Reservoir was built on the Little River. Constructed by the Civilian Conservation Corps (a national public works program) from 1935-38, the dam was built for flood control after several devastating floods in the early 1900s, the worst being the Great Flood of 1927.

Property damage from the 1927 flood in the Winooski River drainage accounted for nearly half of the statewide total of \$30 million; 40 of the 55 fatalities statewide occurred here as well. Today, the reservoir provides flood control, electricity generation and water based recreation to central Vermont residents and tourists.

Elm  
Leaves



### **3. American Elm**

The trees along the water's edge with furrowed bark and rough leaves with toothed margins are American elms. Historically, this native tree was treasured as a shade tree along the streets of New England villages. Dutch elm disease entered this country from Europe in the 1930s on infected nursery stock, killing nearly every mature tree in less than 60 years. American elms are in no danger of becoming extinct however; they are still common in wet areas and along roadsides but seldom reach 30 years of age. Researchers are working on the development of disease-resistant elms to insure survival of this important and graceful shade tree.





#### 4. Nature's Woodcutters

Can you see evidence of beaver activity here? There are many of the beaver's favorite foods along the trail—especially the dense, shrubby speckled alder and fast-growing aspens. Beavers chew down trees to get to the inner bark (cambium) which they eat and then use the wood to build dams and lodges.

#### 5. The Point

Across the reservoir is Ricker Mountain, part of the Green Mountain chain. Behind you looking south to north are the peaks of White Rocks, Hunger and Hogback Mountains and Stowe Pinnacle of the Worcester Mountain chain and all part of CC Putnam State Forest. These mountains were formed about 300 million years ago when the North American continent collided with what is now Africa. The resulting uplift produced jagged peaks that rivaled the present day Alps or Rockies. Subsequent scouring by glaciers and constant seasonal weathering by wind, ice and water have lowered and rounded the mountains to the familiar shapes we see today. While Waterbury Reservoir is a comparatively recent artificial lake, deposits of silt, sand, and gravel indicate postglacial lakes occupied this valley long ago.

The power lines crossing the reservoir trace

the path of an old route between Waterbury and Stowe via Blush Hill (to your left) and Gregg Hill (to your right). In the 1800s an inn and tavern stood on this route in a location now deep under water. Many a weary traveler likely stopped there for a meal and a rest.



The "Old Route"

#### 6. Brambles

The thorny canes here are raspberries, blackberries and dewberries. Collectively they are called "brambles." Brambles are extremely important as both food and cover for wildlife. Bird and mammal species from the gray catbird to the black bear feast on the juicy berries in season. Moose and deer will eat the shoots, leaves and stems in addition to the tasty berries.



Raspberry

#### 7. Sumac Thicket

These tall shrubs with twisting branches are staghorn sumac. Sometimes reaching the size of small trees, the common name comes from the smooth twigs that resemble a buck's antlers in velvet.

(over)



Staghorn sumac produces upright bunches of hairy red fruits which remain on the stalks all winter. These berries are available to ruffed grouse and small birds long after preferred berries are gone. Hare, deer and moose eat the berries, twigs and bark as well. Native Americans soaked the berries in cold water to make a tea-like drink that resembles "pink lemonade." Look for the sun-loving sumac in old fields, forest edges, and roadsides.

### 8. Apple Tree House

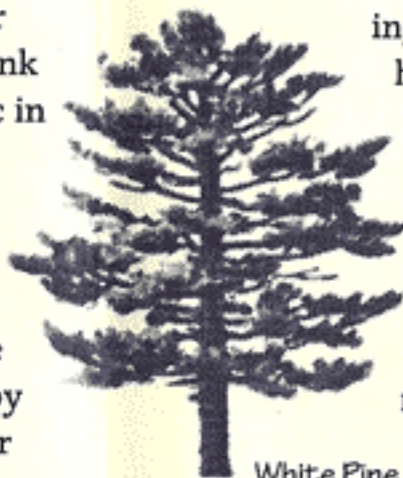
Notice the holes in this old apple tree. The nail-sized holes were tapped in the trunk by the yellow-bellied sapsucker, a woodpecker that eats both tree sap and the insects attracted to the sap as it seeps from the holes. The larger holes were pecked by downy and hairy woodpeckers in search of their favorite food: carpenter ants. These holes later provide homes for small mammals like chipmunks and birds such as black-capped chickadees and eastern bluebirds. The vine twisting up the tree's trunk is wild grape. Its fruit is eaten by a variety of birds and mammals including raccoons, foxes and deer.



Yellow-Bellied Sapsucker

### 9. White Pine Grove

The large evergreen trees with straight trunks and whorls of horizontal branches are eastern white pine. White pine is the largest north-eastern evergreen, and one of our most valuable softwood lumber trees. Towering specimens reaching 200 feet high and 15 feet in diameter greeted European settlers of the New World; the tallest and straightest were coveted masts on sailing ships. The seeds of white pine are eaten by birds with specialized beaks such as red crossbills and pine siskins.



White Pine

### 10. Emerging Hardwood Forest

The tallest trees in this spot are species that quickly colonize old fields. The quaking and bigtooth aspen, black cherry, and gray birch here will not remain dominant. The shade they provide to the forest floor has created the perfect conditions for the next stage of forest trees to establish themselves: sugar maple, American beech, and the coniferous eastern hemlock. These three, along with yellow birch, are the main components of the Northern Hardwood forest association. In time, the hardwoods and hemlock will become the overstory and the large trees you see now will disappear. Understory species such as striped maple (green and white vertical stripes and large maple-like leaves) and alternate-leaf dogwood (distinct "pagoda" like layering of branches one or more of which are often dead and bright orange) will stay near the size they are now. Unlike the aspens and birches, they are able to tolerate shade their entire lives.