

HIKE NO 6: RENOWIP

Distance: 5.80 mi.
Elevation Gain: 774 feet
Time Required: 4.0 - 5.0 hours
Difficulty: Challenging

SUMMARY

This hike begins at the Barta House right outside one of our summer camps - Camp Aquehonga. It visits the shore of Half Moon Lake, passes through the program areas of Camp Aquehonga, and visits the very remote Renowip section of the reservation. Utilizing the main TMR Trail, the hike climbs in and out of the valleys created by Kelsey, Hamilton and Santoro creeks before traversing the “Laurel Labyrinth”, a large stand of mountain laurel intertwined with both the trail and the remains of an old farming field. Although the hike uses maintained gravel roads for about 1/2 its length, the section on the TMR Trail is difficult. There are several creek crossings; an exceptional amount of elevation gain, and the Laurel Labyrinth can be exceptionally difficult to navigate. Good navigation skills and familiarity with map and compass are essential for this hike.

Despite the difficulty level this hike is also exceptionally scenic. There is a waterfall on the outlet of Hamilton Stream - the only known significant waterfall at Ten Mile River. The view from atop the ridge on the trail section sits about 300 feet above the surrounding landscape and cannot be beat. In addition, there are several large stands of hemlock trees - a rarity in this part of the state.

TRAILHEAD DIRECTIONS

From the TMR Headquarters front entrance, make a right hand turn onto Crystal Lake Road (CR-26). After passing Fox Lake (on your right hand side along the side of the highway) make a left hand turn onto the Camp Aquehonga Service Road at a distance of 1.8 mi. from the front entrance of TMR Headquarters. In the summer months, this location is obvious due to the large Camp Aquehonga sign located at the turn. In the off-season, look for a large wooden sign frame and the Barta House [Picture 1].



Picture 1

Cars can be parked just up this road next to the Barta House. Be sure not to block either the yellow gate or the road.

DESCRIPTION

Begin the hike by walking past the Barta House towards the double yellow gate to Camp Aquehonga on the red shale Camp Aquehonga Service Road. After passing the gate, you will notice a large water tower on your left. In summer, the well building (across from the Barta House) fills this tank, which has a capacity of about 50,000 gallons when completely full. After walking about 1,000 feet, you will notice Camp Aquehonga’s Site #10 on your left hand side and the sports field on your right hand side.

At 0.30 mi., you will come to a signed intersection [Picture 2]. Follow the sign towards the lake, a left hand turn, onto another camp service road. Follow the road all the way down to the Camp Aquehonga waterfront [Picture 3] on Half Moon Lake.



Picture 2



Picture 3

Half Moon Lake is primarily used during the summer months for Camp Aquehonga’s waterfront program. Although a bit shallower than most of the lakes at Ten Mile River, in the author’s opinion it is the best lake to fish on the whole reservation. Sunset in early spring here is magnificent, as the sun sets almost directly over the midpoint of the lake when standing at the waterfront area.

After a short break, return back to the signed intersection where you will now make a left turn to continue on the main Camp Aquehonga Service Road, 0.74 mi. from the hike’s beginning. Continuing straight ahead will take you to the Rifle Range and the Field Sports area, and making a right turn will take you back to the Barta House.

Pass both the Scoutcraft & COPE program areas on your left before crossing the outlet of Decker Swamp at 0.86 mi. Decker Swamp at one time prior to the Boy Scout’s purchase of this particular parcel in 1959 functioned as a millpond. If you were to dam up the outlet crossing, the lake would fill in about a year or so to a lake comparable in size to Half Moon Lake. Once the lake was filled, the owner of the dam could install a waterwheel that could power a saw blade or a gristmill.



Picture 4

Continue to stay on the Camp Aquehonga Service Road, bearing left after the outlet crossing. The Hayden Foundation Pool will be on your left [Picture 4] and the Johnson Center will be on your right [Picture 5].



Picture 5

The Hayden Pool was rebuilt in 2004. As you can see, the waterslide is significant, about 30 feet high. The Bill and Keith Johnson Center, built in the Spring of 2016, is Camp Aquehonga’s newest addition. It functions as both Camp Aquehonga’s HQ as well as a STEM merit badge center.

At 0.96 mi., you will pass the Camp Aquehonga medical building on your left-hand side [Picture 6]. This was formerly the camp's office up until the Johnson Center was completed last year. After passing the office, the camp's main parking lot will appear through the trees on your left. At the intersection at the far end of the parking lot make a sharp right turn heading slightly downhill at 1.14 mi. [Picture 7] Shortly thereafter, continue on the service road past the red marked TMR Trail to the road's next intersection. From this trail intersection, taking the TMR Trail left will take you back to Headquarters, some 3.0 mi. distant. A right turn will take you to Trout Pond, about 2.4 mi. away.



Picture 6



Picture 7

Almost immediately after passing the TMR Trail crossing, another intersection is reached with the Mortimer L. Schiff Trail and another yellow pipe gate at 1.32 mi. [Picture 9]. Note: we will refer to the Mortimer L Schiff Trail simply as the "Schiff Trail" for the rest of this guide, and that the Schiff Trail is not actually a footpath but a wide camp road.

Mortimer L. Schiff was a banker, philanthropist and an early benefactor and advocate of the Scouting movement, particularly with the Jewish community. He was elected President of the National Council in 1931, but sadly passed away shortly thereafter. His son, of the same name, provided the funds for Ten Mile River to construct the road after the camp's purchase in 1927.

At the intersection, make a left hand turn onto the Schiff Trail. Follow the Schiff Trail until you reach the next intersection at 1.42 mi. with TMR Trail Access Road #3 [Picture 10]. Making a right turn off of the Schiff Trail and onto the road.

There are four "TMR Trail Access Roads" off of the Schiff Trail, numbered 1 thru 4. The purpose of the roads is to provide emergency access to the trail if required. The TMR Trail parallels the Schiff Trail for almost it's entire length - about 7 miles. Without these roads, it would be difficult to access the TMR Trail for day hikes in this section without having to bushwhack. For this hike, we will be utilizing TMR Trail Access Road's #3 and #4 to access the section of the TMR Trail in between the two roads.



Picture 9



Picture 10

I can personally attest to seeing more wildlife in this section than at any other place in TMR. Black bear, bobcats, deer, porcupines, raccoons, possums, weasels, and birds of all kinds can be found in this section to the quiet observer.

Continuing the hike on TMR Trail Access Road #3, note the enormous white pine trees on each side of the trail, and the remains of a now defunct pit latrine on your left at 1.63 mi. and an open clearing at 1.81 mi. The clearing was once a farm field of some sort, later used as a landing for lumber operations when they built the camp. Interestingly, just about all of the natural materials used to build the original camps in the late 1920's were obtained from the property, including the lumber once harvested in this area [Picture 11].



Picture 11

Right past the field, continue straight ahead at the intersection, bearing left [Picture 12]. It is important to pay close attention after passing the field, as the TMR Trail will come up on both your left and right shortly thereafter. The intersection with the TMR Trail will be reached at about 2.02 mi., where it will make a right hand turn. Making a left turn will take you down to Davis Lake Gate #2, about 4.0 mi. distant.



Picture 12

This is when the challenge begins. This section of the TMR Trail is on top of a ridge, and is constantly beaten by the elements during adverse weather events. The trail has several steep ascents and descents in this section. In addition, the area is prone to flooding in times of high water, making creek crossings challenging. Trees with trail markers are constantly being knocked over by the wind, so it is important to pay close attention. If a marker is missing, have a fellow hiker remain with the last known marker, and send another person up ahead a bit to search for the next one. Red marked surveyor's flagging tape has been used in certain parts of this section to temporarily reroute the trail around wet and boggy areas. If you see surveyor's tape around the vicinity of trail markers, follow them for a short distance to see if you come across another trail marker. It is extremely easy to get lost in this area, is very far from help and assistance may not be easily obtainable. Enter it only in a party of sufficient numbers, and be sure that your group stays together. It goes without saying that if the weather is turning bad or you are running out of daylight that this would be the time to turn back and try the hike again another day.

After making the right turn onto the trail, the trail approaches the edge of the ridge on your left-hand side. You are about 300 feet above the surrounding landscape here, which you can see peeking through the trees. At 2.24 mi., the TMR Trail begins to descend very steeply [Picture 13]. For this descent in particular, go down one at a time.

At 2.37 mi., a curious pile of rocks appears seemingly out of nowhere. A large field of stones, each about the size of a small car, fills an area about the size of a baseball field [Picture 14]. It gives the appearance as if someone dumped them from a giant wheelbarrow at the top of the ridge into the valley below. It is an extraordinarily beautiful and quiet place. The TMR Trail continues on the right side of the rock pile.



Picture 13



Picture 14

Immediately thereafter, the TMR Trail crosses Kelsey Creek. Kelsey Creek can be a raging torrent after the spring snowmelt or after a heavy rain, but barely a trickle in the dry months. If a safe crossing cannot be obtained on the trail, walking about 100 yards downstream has a safer place to cross. Immediately after crossing Kelsey Creek, the TMR Trail makes a sharp right turn [Picture 15] proceeding uphill. There is an old lumber tote road crossing here as well at 2.63 mi.

At 2.71 mi., the trail crosses Hamilton Brook, another substantial stream. There is a significant waterfall located here at the trail crossing, the only on Ten Mile River property. The absolute best time to visit this area is immediately after the spring snowmelt. It is truly a magnificent sight to see, and I would recommend taking this hike at that time of year over all others at TMR. The crossing of Hamilton Brook can be difficult depending on the flow, seek a safer crossing downstream if you have a doubt as to it's safety. Standing at the foot of the falls, you are in one of the most remote parts of Sullivan County [Picture 16].



Picture 15



Picture 16

After crossing Hamilton Brook, the trail begins yet another ascent and descent before reaching the final stream crossing of Santoro Brook at 2.90 mi. This crossing is easier than the prior two, but has a consistent flow of water all year.

At 3.06 mi., a very large stand of eastern hemlock trees comes into view, informally known as Cooper's Pines. Stands like this one are becoming more and more rare in the United States, due to the rapid spread of an insect called the Hemlock woolly adelgid, inadvertently brought to the United States from Asia in the early part of the last century. The bug eats away at the tree in order to get at the tree sap. Over the past several years, the bug has spread rapidly in the Southeast US, killing thousands of acres of hemlock trees in Smoky Mountains National Park. Luckily, the insects are susceptible to cold weather

and hemlock stands north of Maryland have not been affected as to the extent in the South. Some of the trees in the grove are over 100 feet high and about 100 - 125 years old. It is a beautiful place - note how the temperature is considerably cooler in the hemlock grove as opposed to outside of it [Picture 17].



Picture 17

After leaving the welcome respite of Cooper's Pines, it is now time for the most difficult part of the hike - the navigation of the appropriately named Mountain Laurel Labyrinth. Our hike continues on the TMR Trail until its intersection with TMR Access Road No 4.

The beginning of the Mountain Laurel Labyrinth is obvious. Note the mountain laurel growing on each side of the TMR Trail [Picture 18]. The trail at times cuts a barely visible tunnel through the laurel. In this location it is extremely important to pay attention to the markers, as the trail will turn left and right numerous times for the next 0.56 mi. In between sections of "mountain laurel tunnel" there are a few clearings where the trail seems to change directions on a dime. Adding to the challenge, the trail crosses over the remains of several old lumber tote roads that run all over this area.



Picture 18

The author has made every effort to make sure the turns are obvious to the hiker. You will notice that the markers are placed higher than normal on the trees so that they are easier to see from within the laurel. If you get lost or cannot find a marker in this area, use your compass to bushwack to the Schiff Trail, rather than attempting to backtrack or find your way out without it. It is called the "Laurel Labyrinth" for a reason!

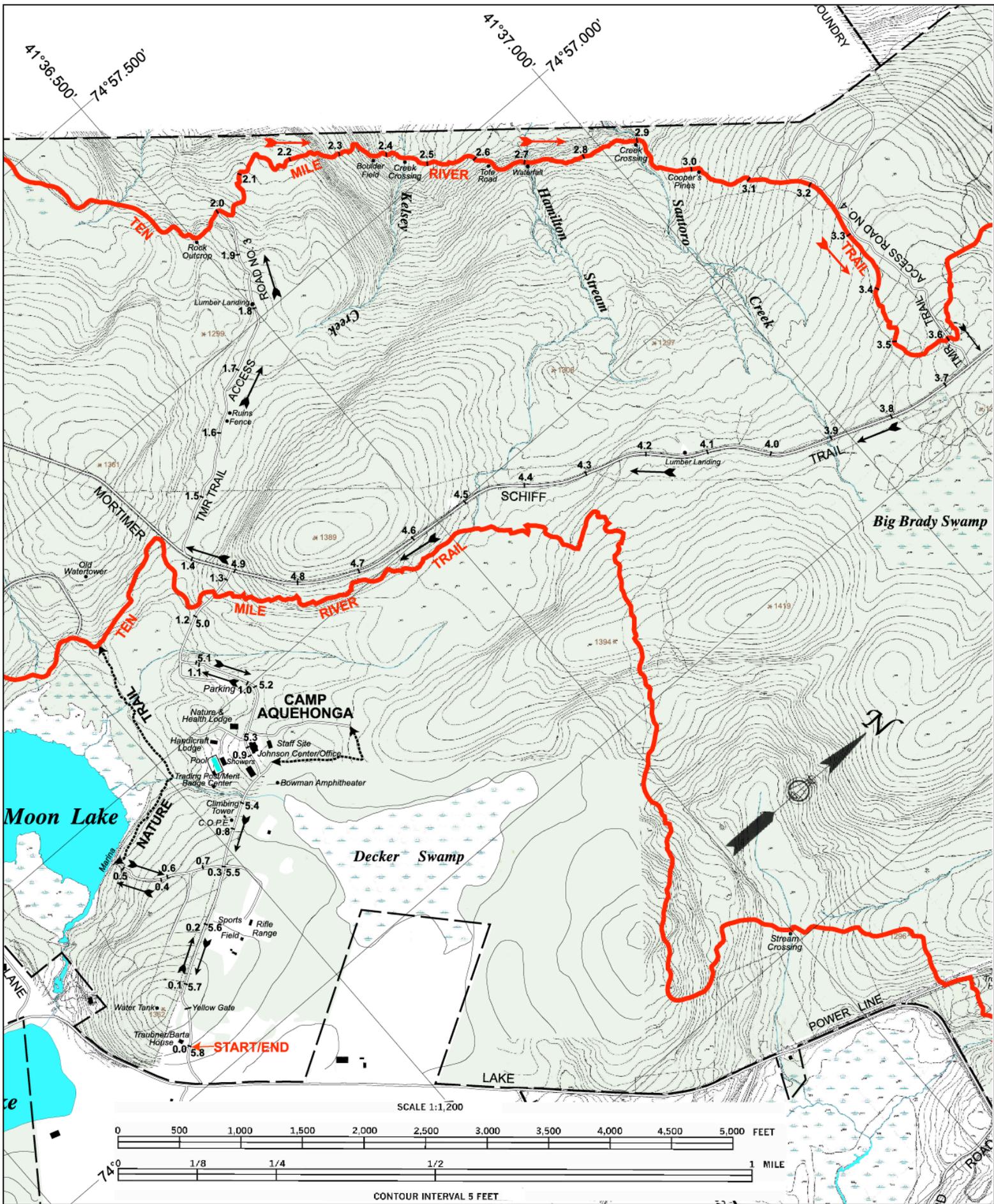
Finally, at 3.60 mi., the TMR Trail exits the mountain laurel and comes to an intersection with TMR Access Road #4 [Picture 19] is reached. It is at this point we leave the TMR Trail, and make a right turn onto TMR Trail Access Road #4. It is extremely important not to miss this location! It looks almost completely indistinguishable from the rest of the Labyrinth, with the exception that it crosses the road. If this spot is missed, and you continue on the TMR Trail, you will end up on the outskirts of Camp Ranachqua in another 1.0 mi. or so in what is mostly an uphill hike.



Picture 19

About 100 feet past the intersection with the TMR Trail on Access Road #4, you will notice the Schiff Trail come into view, a considerably shorter distance than what you experienced on TMR Trail Access Road #3.

Once reaching the Schiff Trail, make a right turn and head back towards the Camp Aquehonga Service Road intersection with the Schiff Trail. Another lumber landing will be passed on your right at 4.11 mi. Look for the familiar yellow gate on your left as shown in *[Picture 9]*, arriving back at this location at a total distance of 4.90 mi. From the yellow gate, backtrack through Camp Aquehonga to arrive back at Barta House, a total distance of 5.80 mi. from the hike's beginning.



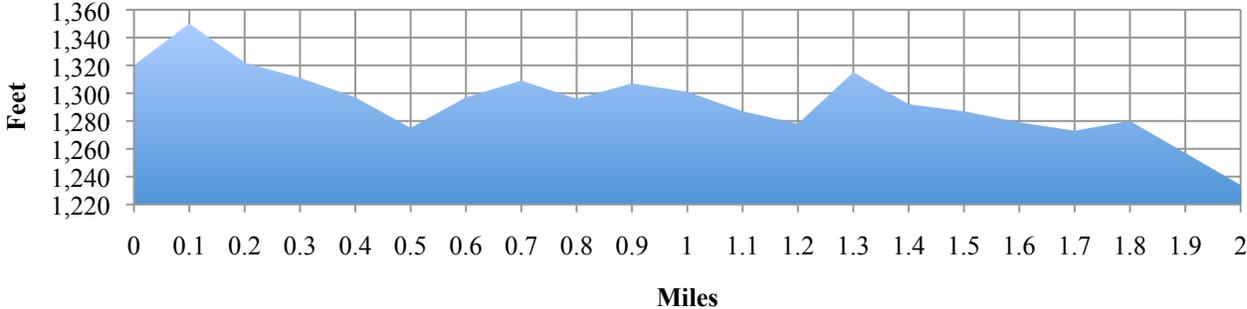
Miles

Hike Summary

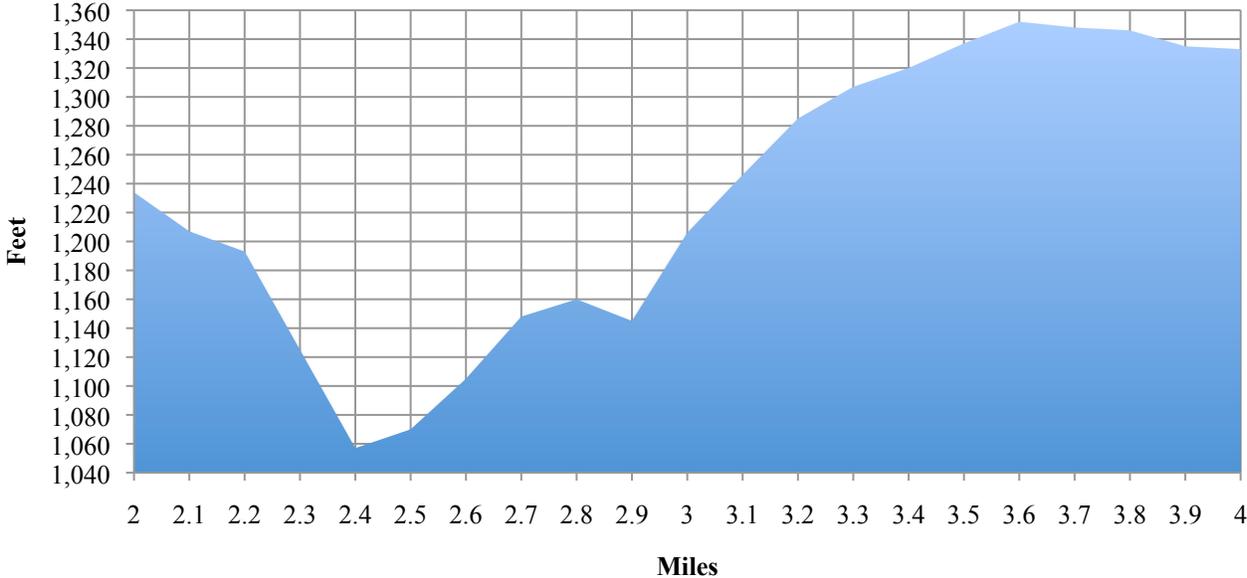
0.00 mi.	Barta House (Trailhead).
0.30 mi.	Signed intersection (left turn and return).
0.74 mi.	Camp Aquehonga Service Road (left turn).
0.86 mi.	Outlet of Decker Swamp.
0.96 mi.	Camp Aquehonga medical building.
1.14 mi.	Far end of parking lot (right turn).
1.32 mi.	Mortimer L. Schiff Trail (left turn).
1.42 mi.	TMR Trail Access Road #3 (right turn).
1.63 mi.	Remains of defunct pit latrine.
1.81 mi.	Clearing.
2.02 mi.	Ten Mile River Trail (right turn).
2.24 mi.	Trail descends very steeply.
2.37 mi.	Boulder field.
2.63 mi.	Old lumber tote road.
2.71 mi.	Waterfall at Hamilton Brook.
2.90 mi.	Cross Santro Brook.
3.06 mi.	Cooper's Pines.
3.04 mi.	Mountain Laurel Labyrinth starts.
3.60 mi.	TMR Access Road #4 (right turn).
3.63 mi.	Mortimer L. Schiff Trail (right turn).
4.11 mi.	Lumber landing.
4.91 mi.	Camp Aquehonga Service Road (left turn).
5.07 mi.	Road turns left.
5.20 mi.	Road turns left.
5.40 mi.	Climbing Tower.
5.75 mi.	Yellow Gate.
5.80 mi.	Barta House (End).

Trail Elevations

0 mi. - 2 mi.



2 mi. - 4 mi.



4 mi. - 5.8 mi.

