

Marilla Reservoir to Chestnut Ridge via Marilla Trails and Bullis Hollow Trail
east to west

USGS topographic maps useful to this hike are the Bradford and Stickney 7.5 minute sectionals. These notes are designed to assist in identifying distance and location using geophysical and man-made characteristics that persist within the route of the trail. Mileage figures are consecutive, east to west, following white diamond blazes placed either side of the trail. Elevation at the parking area at Marilla Reservoir is approximately 1720 feet above sea level. At Chestnut Ridge elevation is approximately 2220 feet above sea level. Between these points the trail climbs to 2300 feet, drops to near 1600 feet, then makes its way to the western end.

The length of the hike is approximately 12 miles. The Marilla Springs Trail is shared with bicycles. The Bullis Trail is a hiker only trail through the Allegheny National Forest. The Chestnut Ridge Area, west of Forest Route 137 is a Wilderness Study Area. Trail maintenance there is confined to non-motorized tools.

Please report the location of trail maintenance issues to:

info@tunavalleytrail.com

or

Tuna Valley Trail Association

P.O. Box 1003

Bradford, PA 16701

Measurements and elevations were made with a hand held GPS unit that may not agree with equipment carried by the hiker. Depend on USGS sectional maps, a reliable compass, and follow the white diamond blazes. Always file a plan with someone who knows your expected route and predetermined time of return.

Hike begins five and one-half miles west of Bradford, PA on PA 346. Park at the western end of Marilla Reservoir, approximately 0.2 mi. past the covered foot bridge at the spillway. There is a sharp left and steep downhill to the parking area with space for four to six vehicles. The Marilla Trail System includes many walking paths. This hike will utilize of two of them.

0.0 mi. East from this parking area a wooden footbridge can be easily accessed on a short path. That bridge is Horn's Crossing. Turn right, south, and cross the bridge on the Marilla Bridges Trail, which is a loop around this reservoir. Follow the limestone walkway around the western side of the reservoir to another bridge on the left. Before crossing that bridge note the sign for White Pine Trail. White Pine will intersect with the Marilla Springs Trail about 1 mile from here. As you cross the bridge, a gazebo appears beneath the hemlocks on

the eastern end of the bridge. Turn right, south, onto the Marilla Springs Trail at the gazebo. This trail begins at an elevation, here, of 1764 feet above sea level and rises to nearly 2300 ft. where it joins the Bullis Hollow trail. Except for its southwestern terminus the Springs Trail is unblazed. The surface, for the most part, is wide and easy to follow, paralleling Marilla Brook to its source over 3.5 miles to the southwest

0.4 mi. (*trailhead at Gazebo*) Marilla Springs Trail

Begin southward journey passing a kiosk bearing the trail name. This section is a pleasant walk over a mostly flat to slightly rolling limestone walkway. There are occasional benches overlooking the creek through a mixed forest of hemlock and hardwoods. Some trees have identifying tags on them so that people unfamiliar with the species could gain some understanding. Generally, this part of the hike is through a park-like setting.

0.6 mi. (*Bridge*) Trail crosses a wooden bridge over a Marilla Brook tributary. Just west of here, this trail leaves the Bradford 7.5 quadrangle map and continues on the Stickney Quadrangle for the rest of its journey.

1.0 mi. White Pine Trail intersects from the right. The park-like setting ends. Beyond here the treadway is earthen, but retains its original width. The trail continues mostly southwest. This trail is non-motorized, but shared with bicycles whose tracks often appear in the softer surface. The canopy reflects the mixed forest, with some areas very well shaded.

1.4 mi. (*Bridge*) Trail crosses a second wooden bridge.

1.8 mi. (*Timber Harvest Area*) Trail leaves the shaded forest and is bounded on the left, east, by an area of recent timber harvest. The harvest is edged with a deer exclusion fence that is visible from time to time on the left side of the trail. With no canopy; new, low growth encroaches the trail. A persistent path has been worn through this growth and is relatively easy to follow for about 0.5 mi.

2.3 mi. At the end of the timber harvest area the trail turns right, west, and re-enters the forest. The wider treadway reappears. The trail touches a pipeline Right-of-Way, turns away from it, sharply northeast, within 80 feet turns west, then resumes its route to the southwest crossing the same right of way.

2.6 mi. Trail bends west and uphill, arcing across a steep incline. The trail then returns to a gentle climb to the southwest.

3.4 mi. (*Spring*) Fifty feet to the north of here is a piped spring. Treat the water as untested! In this area one notices blue diamond blazes with a centered white dot. These should be followed to the Bullis Hollow Trail.

3.5 mi. (*Marilla Springs west end*) FS 173H

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FS 173H Marilla Springs to Bullis Hollow Trail 0.2 mi.

Although still within the Bradford Water Authority lands, this road will take the hiker west of here into the Allegheny National Forest and an intersection with the Bullis Hollow Trail. At 3.7 mi. a logging road intersects FS 173H from the right. Follow blue blazes past this road and up a slight incline to the Bullis Hollow Trail, a right turn.

3.8 mi. Bullis Hollow Trail 8.9 miles

On the Stickney Quadrangle the hiker is located at an eastern corner of the ANF and property of the Bradford Water Authority. From this elevation of near 2300 feet this trail will follow a narrow gauge railroad line into the valley of the North Branch of Sugar Run, a drop to near 1600 feet, then rise to more than 2200 feet above sea level at its western terminus on PA 321 near Tracy Ridge Campground. This hiker trail is approximately 8.7 miles in length. Beginning, here, the trail points northwest crossing FS173 following a white diamond blaze.

4.3 mi. FS 173 Stickney Lane. Elevation 2317 feet

The trail arcs broadly across the top of the ridge, first north, then bending west, then southwest to a crossing with FS 158. The railroad imprint is less noticeable across this flat section.

4.7 mi. If the hiker looks over his right shoulder, another rail grade intersects here. White blazes direct the hiker to the southwest following this rail grade.

4.9 mi. A carsonite post marks Forest Service 158. Gated to the north, it is seldom used. The trail crosses the grassy road surface, angling to the north side of the rail grade. The blazes place the trail along the north berm of the rail grade heading southwest. For approximately the next 0.3 miles the trail switches between the north and south side of the grade due to drainage issues.

5.2mi. The trail rejoins the grade. The first signs of Railroad Run as a viable stream appear on the left.

5.4 mi. A former jeep road intersects the grade. The trail shifts to the north, avoiding the cut, crosses the old jeep road, and angles southwest to the grade. The trail heads southwest from here paralleling Railroad Run.

5.7 mi. A wet weather ditch cuts through the trail. This is easily crossed. Shortly thereafter, the rail grade is disrupted for approximately 400 feet. Trains probably crossed on a low trestle. White blazes carry the hiker across the gap going southwest. The trail resumes on the rail bed.

6.0 mi. Cross a deep ditch veering north then return to the rail grade.

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6.2 mi. Cross Railroad Run. This is the first of two stream crossings within a short distance of each other. Trail and rail grade are identical once across. In times of high water be mindful of staying on the north side of the stream for the next 0.1 mile thereby crossing only once.

6.4 mi. Cross Railroad Run. Shortly, leave the grade to the right, cross a small, unnamed branch of Railroad Run which flows from the north; then return to the grade where the blazes resume.

6.6 mi. Bear right to skirt the stream. The trail does not cross the stream here, but edges the northwest side of the water for the next 0.2 mile, working its way between the bank and a steep hillside, through beech brush, and a former blow down. Follow the blazes south to rejoin the rail grade.

6.7 mi. Bear right to skirt the stream which laps at the edge of the trail.

6.8 mi. The trail bends slightly to the left, south, and crosses an old washout, and rejoins the grade within 300feet. The treadway remains consistent with the removal of railroad ties.

7.1 mi. (*North Branch of Sugar Run*) The rail bed resumes on the other side of this stream. At the stream bank turn slightly right and follow the blazes along the water's edge. Approaching the last blaze, turn left. There a series of natural stones spaced within the streambed furnishes steps toward the stream's south side.

(In times of high water leave the rail grade east of this stream crossing. Proceed downhill toward a comfortable crossing of Railroad Run. Walk south to Bullis Run. Cross it and turn west, toward the resumption of the trail on the railroad grade.)

Once across the North Branch of Sugar the white blazes identify the trail on the same rail grade which is a short walk south of the present stream bed for approximately 100 feet. The trail continues in a westerly direction on this grade.

7.2 mi. The blazes turn left, southwest, and climb a slope, eventually making a left to the south and arriving at another rail grade.

7.3 mi. Turn right, west, on a rail grade that will take the hiker to FS 137. There are two areas along this section that the trail avoids by rising left to the high side of the rail bed in times of wet weather, but following this grade west will deliver you to FS 137.

7.4 mi. Leave the rail grade to the left, southwest. Traverse the hillside following the white diamonds to avoid a bog area within the grade. The trail arcs back to the grade.

7.5 mi. Turn left, return to the rail grade,

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7.6 mi. Leave the rail grade to the left, southwest. Traverse the hillside following the white diamonds to avoid a wet area. The trail regains the grade in approximately 0.1 mile by arcing to the northwest.

7.7 mi. Return to the grade following white blazes westward. FS137 is within sight to the west.

Bullis Hollow Trail FS137 Fire Road to Chestnut Ridge elevation 1660 ft

7.9 mi. (FS 137) Trail turns north here and follows this dirt road approximately 0.1 mile. Cross N.B. Sugar Run on the road bridge and proceed north toward the base of the hill on the road.

8.0 mi. This is the eastern edge of the Wilderness Study Area. The trail turns west on a former, "cart path" blocked by banked earth and boulders. This one time logging road will carry the trail to the valley of Indian Run. The term cart path is applied due to the abandonment of a trailer once used to remove chemical wood from this area. The "cart" is found a short distance west on this trail.

8.1mi. (*Whitney Run*) Cross this stream in low water stepping on the boulders occurring within the stream bed. In times of high water go upstream to a comfortable crossing, then follow the stream back to this location on the opposite bank. Trail rises on the western stream bank into a hardwood forest on a westward heading. The cart path soon wyes. Stay to the uphill path. There is a short bend to the northwest, then west-southwest. (NOTE: White diamond blazes are placed less frequently due to the trail following the rutted bed of the old road.)

8.5 mi. (*The Cart*) The remains are of a cord wood trailer most likely used to harvest and haul timber for the chemical wood industry.

8.7mi. The trail leaves the former skid road. It crosses open forest for approximately 100 feet to the north. Blazes turn northwest and uphill toward a grove of hemlock trees. Climb this rise, for an easy crossing of the drainage. Trail crosses the stream bed, then immediately picks up the skid road going south for approximately 350 feet.

8.9 mi. The trail traverses the hill side moving west toward Indian Run. This traverse avoids wetlands lower in the valley. Footing is rock strewn and hidden in ferns and tall grasses.

9.2 mi. Approaching Indian Run, the trail coincides with a former narrow gauge rail bed for a short distance going northwest. The trail routes to the north for a short distance, then northwest. As the trail climbs, the skid path, a ledge parallel to the stream, carries the treadway.

(NOTE: An ideal spot for primitive overnight camping occurs near Indian Run.)

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9.5 mi. The trail routes around an old washout, regains the ledge, and continues climbing toward the north.

9.8 mi. (*Side hill benching*) An area of flat stones marks drainage issues across the ledge. Topography slopes toward the stream, but side-hill benching alleviates footing concerns.

9.9 mi. Trail leaves the ledge, and proceeds generally to the north. There are numerous jogs in direction as the trail deals with the various drainages that make Indian Run. Black arrows on the blazes illustrate the more radical changes. The steepness of the climb relaxes through this section.

10.5mi. The trail climbs above 2200 feet and continues north toward the Johnson Farm Road. 10.7 mi. A metal sign post indicates a geodetic survey marker, a few feet south of the former road.

10.7 mi. Bullis Hollow Trail Johnson Farm Rd to PA 321

Turn left, west, just beyond this marker. Though returning to a natural state, the road retains ruts and puddles as it makes a broad curve to the northwest from this point. Blazes appear less frequently along here. The trail stays with the road for 0.6 mile.

11.4 mi. The trail turns right, north, to avoid wet areas toward PA 321. Blazes carry the path near the eastern edge of a former pasture, now returning to forest.

11.6mi. Turn northwest to cross an end of the former pasture, now colonized by wild blueberry bushes.

11.7 mi. Turn right; go north for approximately 300 feet following the white blazes.

11.9 mi. Turn northwest. Proceed toward PA321 and the Johnny Cake Trailhead parking area.