

**Pack 618 Bike Hike
From Lake Elkhorn To Savage Park
April 26, 2008**

This year, the Bike Hike will start at Lake Elkhorn and follow the bike path under Broken Land Parkway and beyond, all the way to Savage Park. This trail is called the “Patuxent Branch Trail”. We will meet at Lake Elkhorn near the tunnel (between the dam and Broken Land Parkway) for a 9:30 AM start time.

There is parking in a small lot along Broken Land Parkway, along Cradlerock way (next to playground) and in a parking lot at the end of Dockside Lane. There are parking lots across Broken Land Parkway also. (See Figure 1, the arrows indicate parking areas)

The one-way trip is approximately 5 miles. We ask that each rider be outfitted with enough water for the trip. We will have bottled water available at the starting point and at the park. Bring snacks to keep your energy up during the ride.

We intend to have someone with a van take all lunches to the park so that the riders will have their lunches available when they arrive. Participants are responsible for bringing their own lunch and snacks. We will load the lunches into shuttle-van prior to the bike hike. (Any volunteers?)

We will also need adults on the trip to take the First-Aid kit in case of mishap. Additionally, an adult will need to trail the pack to make sure that we don't lose anyone. Those willing to fulfill these roles, please identify yourselves prior to the beginning of the trip.

The hike ends at Savage Park, at the baseball fields/tennis courts area. (See Figure 2) We will eat our lunches there. Bottled water will be available.

Bikers wishing to do so will return to Lake Elkhorn after lunch.

The Bike Hike is being organized and led by Mr. Jason Carlisi this year. Please give him your full support (and a pat on the back!) the day of the event.

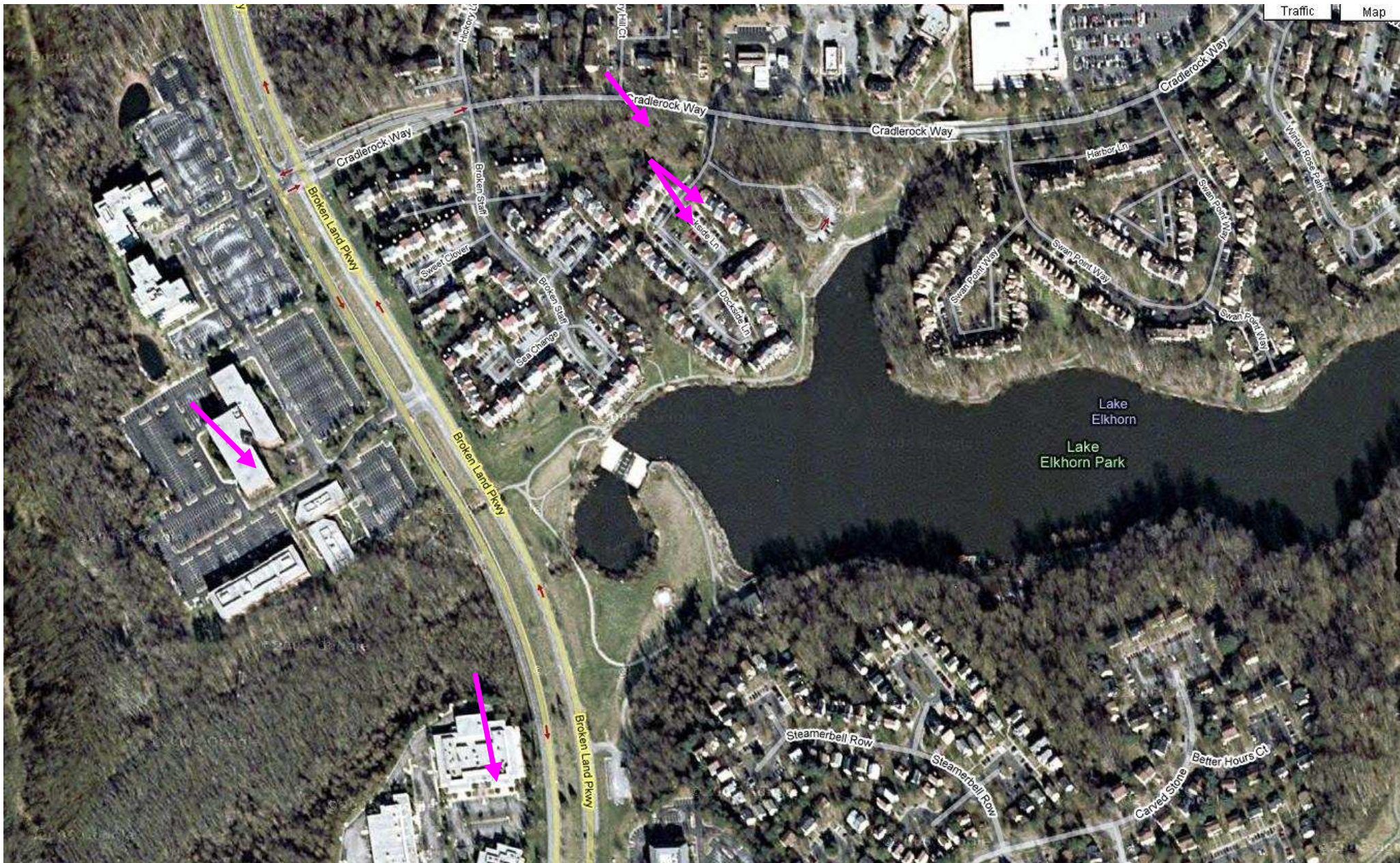


Figure 1
Lake Elkhorn Parking

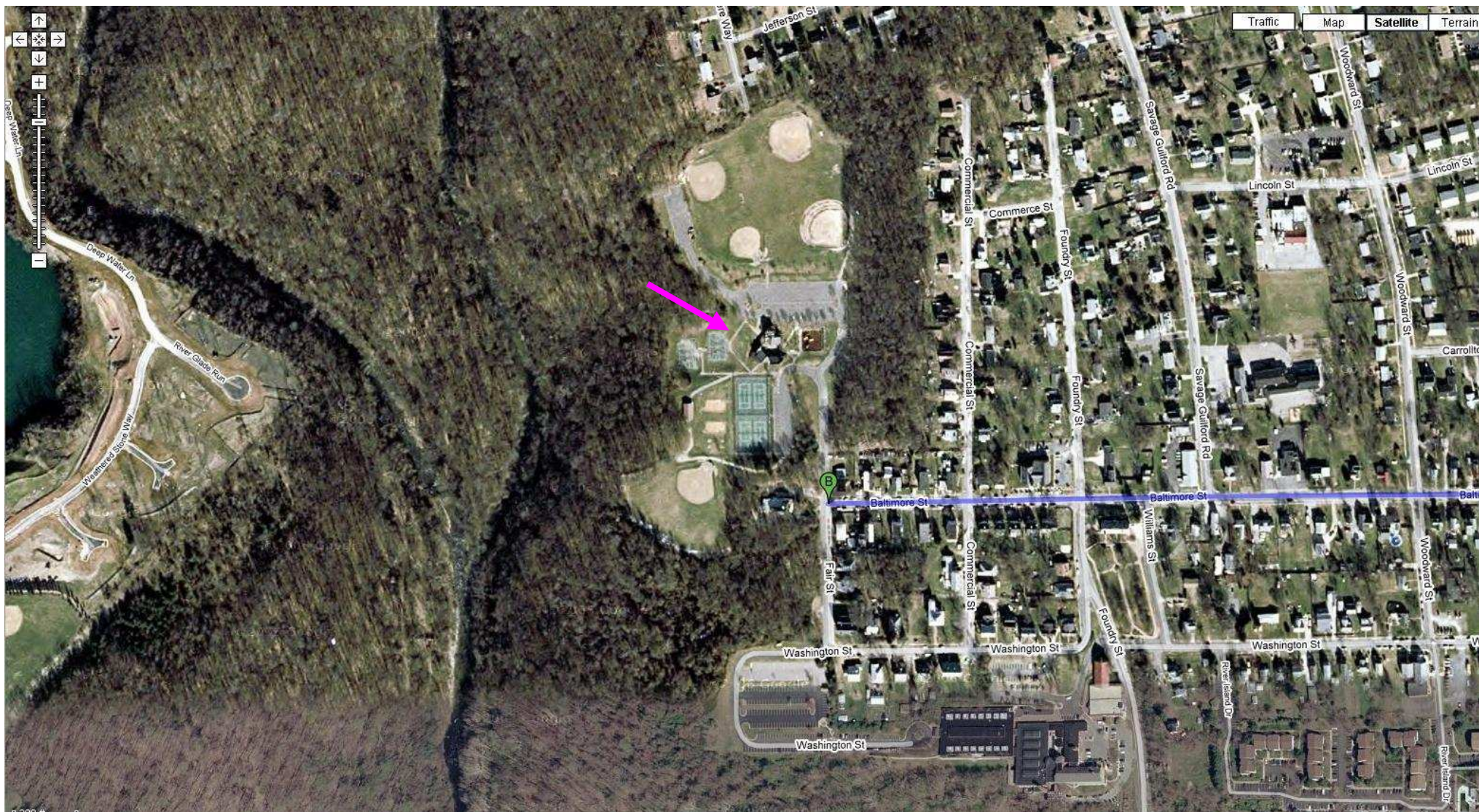


Figure 2
Savage Park Meeting Area



60 HIKES *within* 60 MILES

PATUXENT BRANCH TRAIL



KEY AT-A-GLANCE INFORMATION

LENGTH: 10.4 miles

CONFIGURATION: Out-and-back with an added lake loop

DIFFICULTY: Moderate due to length

SCENERY: Patuxent River, Lake Elkhorn, historic bridge

EXPOSURE: More shade than sun

TRAFFIC: Moderate on trail; heavy at lake

TRAIL SURFACE: Asphalt, packed dirt, crushed rock

HIKING TIME: 3–3.5 hours

ACCESS: Dawn to dusk daily; Lake Elkhorn open 6 a.m.–10 p.m. daily

MAPS: USGS Savage; trail maps available at the parking areas along the route

FACILITIES: Restrooms and water at Lake Elkhorn and Savage Park

SPECIAL COMMENTS: You can shorten your hike by parking at any of the three areas along the route, and you can make the hike one way by setting up shuttles at Savage Park and Lake Elkhorn.

Patuxent Branch Trail

UTM Zone (WGS84) 18S

Easting 341887

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► IN BRIEF

Hike a scenic forested river valley along the Patuxent River through a portion of an old B&O rail bed from Savage Park in Savage north to Lake Elkhorn in Columbia.

► DESCRIPTION

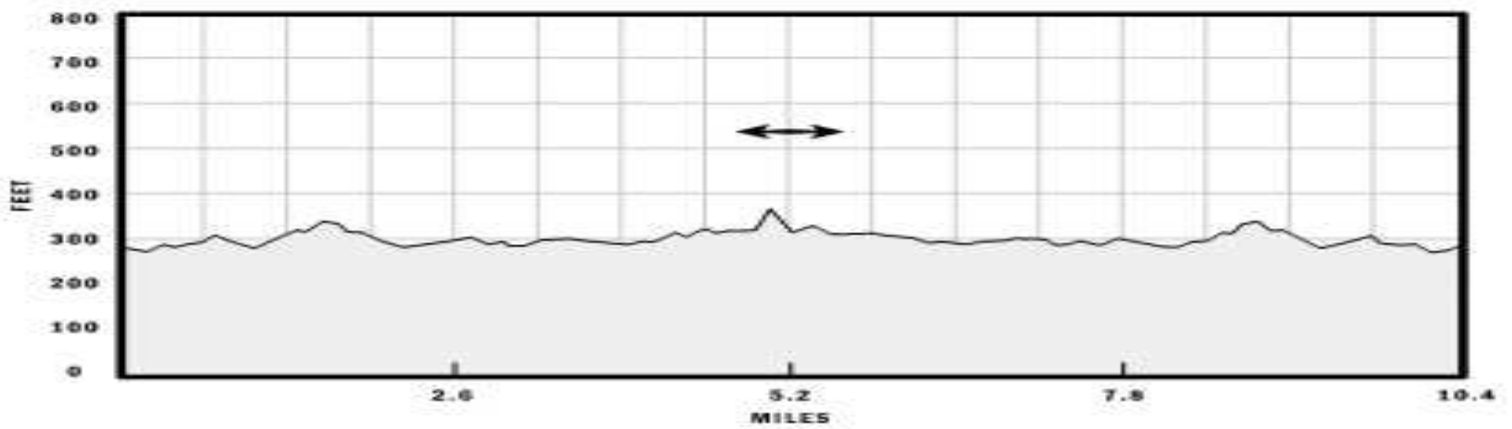
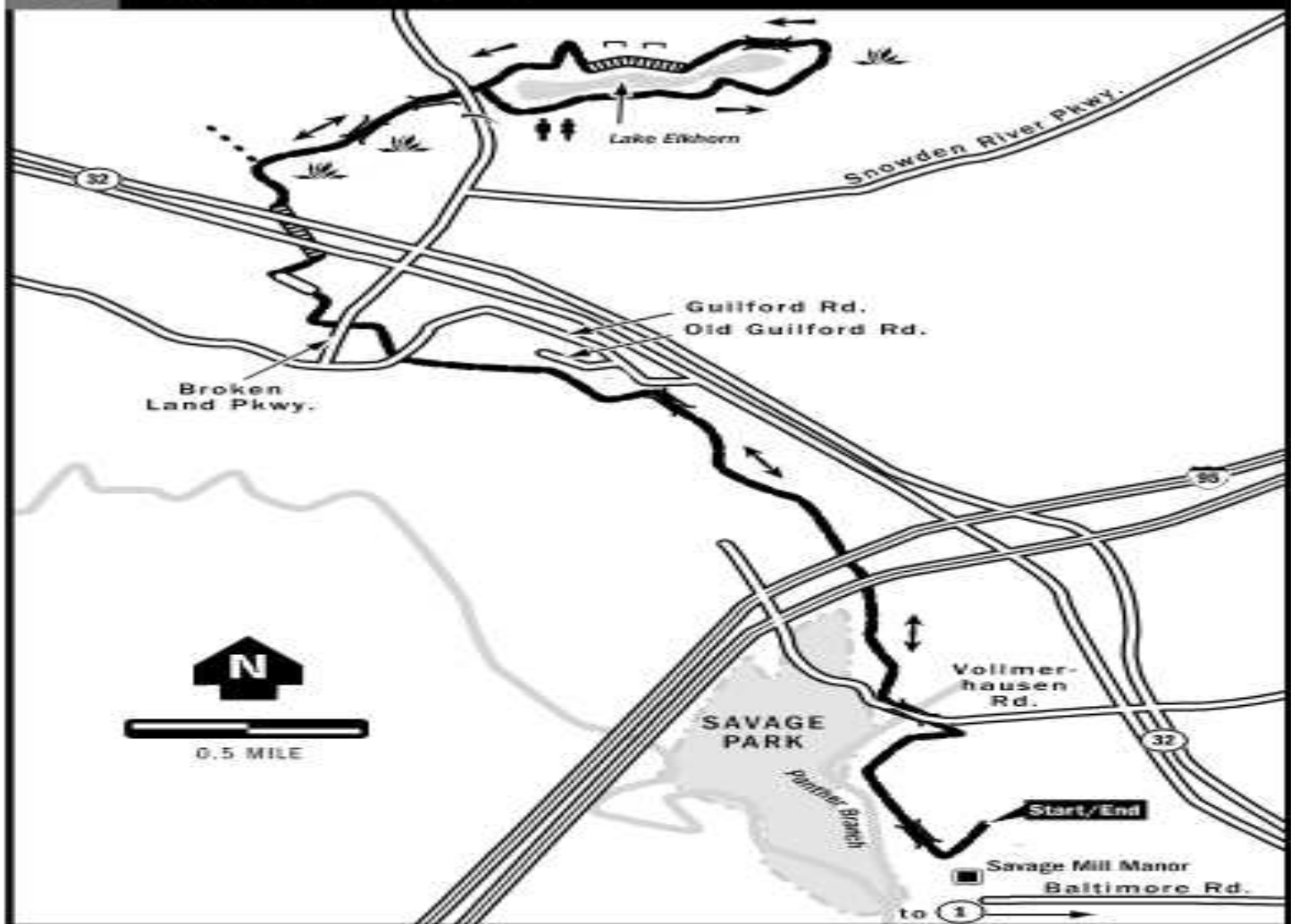
Inaugurated by a ribbon-cutting ceremony on November 2, 2002, Patuxent Branch Trail connects many sections of Columbia's extensive pathway network. From the asphalt trailhead, you will go immediately into a stand of mature trees—mostly oaks and tulip poplars. Be on the lookout for white-tailed deer, which congregate in this area. At 250 feet, the trail splits; follow the sign pointing to the right that give the mileage to Vollmerhausen Road, the Pratt Railroad Bridge, and Lake Elkhorn.

At 0.2 miles, you will cross over a wooden bridge marked "B1." You will see the Panther Branch of the Patuxent on the left and lots of beautiful beech trees in this section. After 0.5 miles, the trail opens up and runs behind Patuxent Middle School and Bollman Bridge Elementary. You'll reach Vollmerhausen Road at 0.7

► DIRECTIONS

Take I-695 to Exit 11, I-95 south toward Washington, D.C. Take MD 32 east toward Fort Meade (Exit 38) and a quick exit onto MD 1 south toward Savage. Stay in the right lane and take an immediate right onto Howard Road, which soon turns into Baltimore Road. Follow Baltimore straight until you see Savage Mill Manor; then turn right into the park and go as far as you can to the left. The trail starts at that farthest left point at the edge of the parking lot across from the baseball and soccer fields; you'll see a map of the Patuxent Branch Trail on a bulletin board there.

58 Patuxent Branch Trail





Patuxent River

miles; turn left and walk along the sidewalk. Admittedly, walking along the road isn't very nice, but you'll soon be back in the woods; cross Panther Branch on the bridge at just under 0.9 miles and take a right across Vollmerhausen Road. Go 200 feet to the left and then turn right at the trail map sign and head into the woods.

You'll no longer be on asphalt, but rather crushed rock and dirt. Patuxent River runs on the right as you walk upstream; mature walnut, sumac, sassafras, oak, and tulip poplar trees flank this section of the trail, which runs along the rail bed of the main line of the B&O railroad. The B&O, the nation's first passenger line, ran between Baltimore and Ellicott City beginning in 1830; this particular spur of the B&O's Washington Branch served the textile mills and quarries between Savage and Guilford until 1928.

This may not be the best hike for solitude, but it gives you the chance to marvel at the existence of a long stretch of thick woods running through a heavily populated suburban center. In addition, the scenery is often very lovely; for instance, you will see lots of ferns along the trail at 1 mile. On the downside, it's almost impossible not to hear cars along the route even though you will rarely ever see them; the traffic noise grows especially loud at 1.2 miles when you walk under the two I-95 bridges soaring several hundred feet above your head. This area also provides an interesting perspective for people on I-95; while they're driving along at more than 70 mph, they see a nice ribbon of thick woods stretching away from the interstate. On the trail under the interstate, you can see the river, the mature trees, and the occasional deer, all up close.

The woods grow especially thick along the trail away from the I-95 bridges. You will see lots of cut paths to the river; head down to the river to see for yourself why it was named "Patuxent," the Algonquian word for "rapids." The big rocks in the river create eddies and pools that make enough babbling noise to drown out the traffic above.

At 1.7 miles, the trail leads uphill and comes out to an open area, providing good opportunities on the right to see birds; from the high angle here you can look

into the tops of the trees and see finches, cardinals, blue jays, red-winged blackbirds, and bluebirds flit around the branches.

At just before 1.9 miles, the trail splits at another mileage marker indicating 2 miles to Lake Elkhorn; follow the trail in that direction, and you'll soon come to and cross over the Pratt Through-Truss Railroad Bridge, built in 1901. The second parking area option for this hike is just beyond this bridge on the left. (To begin your hike here, from MD 32, turn south off Guilford Road onto Old Guilford Road and then turn left into the parking lot.)

You will follow Old Guilford Road, which is now closed to westward traffic, for a while before it reverts to a narrower asphalt path. This section of the trail will remind you that you're walking through suburban Columbia; every so often a building or house will pop into view, but just as often, thick stands of woods will crowd both sides of the trail. The result is a strange battle between the sounds of moving cars and birdcalls. You will cross a power-line cut at 2.4 miles and then walk under Guilford Road Bridge. Lots of deer live in this area; if you don't see any of them, you'll at least see thousands of their hoofprints in the mud along the trail. At 2.7 miles, you will pass under Broken Land Parkway as the trail winds through an area with a little creek. A 3,000-foot wooden boardwalk takes you across the boggy, marshy, very thickly wooded land. You will come to another wooden boardwalk at 2.9 miles; go straight here, following the sign to Lake Elkhorn, where a big stand of beech and tulip poplar decorate both sides of the trail.

Another wooden boardwalk at 3.1 miles will take you across a marshy area and under MD 32. Despite the highway above, you will enjoy this spot, which is full of cattails and aquatic life; in addition, the white wildflowers here attract a multitude of butterflies. When the trail splits at 3.5 miles, head right toward the lake through thick woods and underbrush. Another wooden bridge carries you past a little creek bed on the right. You will come to a steel bridge at 3.8 miles, just before you reach the Broken Land Parkway underpass; Lake Elkhorn is on the other side. (To begin your hike here, take Broken Land Parkway south from MD 29 and turn left onto Cradlerock Way and then turn right onto Dockside Lane).

The man-made 37-acre Lake Elkhorn, created in 1974, averages only 8 feet in depth, but its watershed stretches some 2,500 acres. Since the lake trail is a loop, you can head in either direction; to follow the mileage in the hike described here, go to the right. One of the first things you'll see is a warning sign about the northern copperhead snake; the sign tells of two dogs that died after being bitten. Generally speaking, the chances of being bitten by a northern copperhead are slim to none, but take proper caution; if you see a snake and it has an hour glassed-shaped head, give it a wide berth.

At 4.2 miles, you will see a pavilion, which has restrooms, on the right. A fishing pier juts into the lake, which is stocked each spring with trout and bass. Waterfowl that live on and around the lake include trumpeter and mute swans, Canada geese, white Chinese geese, mallards, and great blue herons. As you continue around the lake, you'll see many path offshoots; these head into the residential areas surrounding the lake. Sometimes these houses sit right next to the lake; other times you will barely be able to see them through the thick buffer of red oak, tulip poplar, and maple trees.

You'll reach the farthest edge of the lake at 4.8 miles. You will cross a small footbridge here on the right at the lake's edge, and you will see lots of lily pads and other aquatic plants. Generally speaking, the majority of the waterfowl live at this end of the lake. Houses get closer to the trail here, but so does the lake itself; in a few places the trail has only 5 feet of open space on either side. At 5.4 miles, the trail turns to a wooden waterfront promenade; a platform with benches makes this a convenient place to sit. You will see lots of reeds and rushes on the left, a favorite haunt for red-winged blackbirds. You will come to Lake Elkhorn Dam at 5.7 miles and the lake's entry point from the Patuxent Branch Trail at 6.3 miles, completing your hike.

► NEARBY ACTIVITIES

Savage Park, the hike's starting point, includes historic Savage Mill, a 19th-century textile mill that has been restored and adapted for use as an arts and crafts retail center. Antiques shops, home furnishings stores, craft galleries, artist studios, specialty shops, restaurants, and an authentic French bakery fill its more than 175,000 square feet. For more information, visit www.savagemill.com or call (800) 788-6455.