

## Farmington Flats Loop Trail 3.0 miles



This loop follows the bottom of a glacial lake created 12,000 years ago.

The Farmington Flats is a local term that is known as a great area for farming due to its deep, rich, level topsoil that seems to be missing rocks. It is also the location where the Farmington River stops flowing south and turns to the north. Many years the Flats get flooded by the Farmington River, which adds a new layer of topsoil and an even better area for farming, as long as it doesn't happen in the growing season. In 1645 the town was incorporated and named Farmington because it was such a great farming town. The reason for this goes back a few years.

In pre-glacial times, the Farmington River flowed south from here to join the Quinnipiac River and emptied into Long Island Sound. As the glaciers advanced, they pushed a mass of glacial till to the front and sides of it. When the climate changed and became warmer, the glacier stopped moving and deposited a terminal moraine to the south. The Farmington River could no longer flow south, so a lake began to form. The lake became quite long because the Metacomet Ridge to the east had no weak areas until it reached the Tariffville area of Simsbury. The flooding every year brought new rich sediment that had no place to go but the bottom of the lake. The elevation of the Flats is about 160 feet above sea level and is mostly surrounded by lands with an elevation above 200 feet. The lake at the Flats was about 40 feet deep. The weak point in the east was a red sandstone deposit in the present area known as Tariffville Gorge. The Farmington River had a new outlet as it now flowed into the Connecticut River. The lake slowly started to drain and left behind the rich flat soil from here to Simsbury. Today, the elevation of the Farmington River in Unionville is 178 feet and at the start of Tariffville Gorge it is 130 feet. At the Farmington Flats the down stream flow changed to the north, when the Gorge got eroded to below 160 feet. The elevation of the Connecticut River in Hartford is near 0 because it is tidal.

The Farmington Flats Loop is 3.0 level miles, perfect for hiking, running, and dog walking, but you better move faster than a glacier or you will never make it home for dinner. Park at the northwest corner of the first parking lot on the right in Tunxis Mead Park ( 41° 43' 45.34" N 72° 51' 16.27" W). The loop can be done in either direction, but I prefer counter clockwise because the straight Meadow Road Bike Trail lets you experience most of the 1.2 mile wide glacial lake at the start. Turn left at the Nancy Conklin Trailhead, making note of the big change of direction of the Farmington River at the confluence with the Pequabuck River. Follow the well defined trail next to the river. Look to your left to note the height of the former lake frontage. This was not a shallow lake. When you reach the northern corner of the last agricultural field, turn left and then right to return to the parking lot.

Link to the Ice Age in Connecticut: <http://www.wesleyan.edu/ctgeology/Glacial/GlacialGeology.html>