

# Cumberland Trail New River Segment

[Download printable Topo Maps and GPS Waypoints](#)

The New River Segment enables hikers to visit some of the wildest, most remote, and least-visited terrain in Tennessee. Section 1--the Arch Mountain Section--begins at the northeast corner of Frozen Head State Park, proceeds northward crossing the shoulder of Arch Mountain, then descends the Straight Fork watershed to reach its northern terminus near the confluence of Cave Branch and Smoky Creek. The Lawson Mountain Section (Section 2) ascends the Cave Branch watershed and climbs a ridge to its headwaters, descends into the valley of Bowling Branch, ascends Lawson Mountain with its outstanding views, and finally descends the Lick Creek watershed to the New River. Section 3--the Anderson and Cross Mountains Section--ascends from the river to two beautiful meadows atop Anderson Mountain, descends to Green's Branch and the Montgomery Fork, then climbs to the highest elevation on the Cumberland Trail atop Cross Mountain before descending to the Bruce Gap Trailhead at Cove Lake State Park and the end of the segment. As of mid-2010, Section 1 is under construction and is not ready for hikers; Sections 2 and 3 are complete and open for hiking.

Section Number	Section Name	Southern Terminus	Northern Terminus	Distance (miles)
1	Arch Mountain	NE corner, Frozen Head State Park	Smoky Creek Road	at least 9 when complete
2	Lawson Mountain	Smoky Creek Road	Norma Road	9.8
3	Anderson & Cross Mountains	Norma Road	Cove Lake State Park	17.2
Total				at least 36

The trail features of the guides to Sections 2 and 3 are presented as if one is traveling from north to south. This is because Section 1 will not be open for hiking until sometime in 2011, and until then we expect most people will be hiking in this direction. Of course, it is certainly possible to drive to the southern termini of Sections 2 or 3 and hike north. Important: this segment passes through the North Cumberland Wildlife Management Area. Hikers are required to wear blaze orange during big game hunting seasons. For season dates, check with the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency (TWRA) at (800) 332-0900 or [www.tnwildlife.org](http://www.tnwildlife.org).

## Section 2: LAWSON MOUNTAIN 9.8 Miles

### Overview

From its northern terminus on Norma Road, the trail crosses the New River and ascends 1,300 feet in just over 3 miles to reach the top of Lawson Mountain. A scenic traverse of the ridge is followed by a 800-foot descent to Bowling Branch. A pleasant, fairly level stroll precedes the second major climb of the Section--an ascent of nearly 900 feet to a rocky spine dividing two major watersheds. After another level traverse, the trail descends toward remote Cave Branch, then works its way southeast to the Smoky Creek Road trailhead. Highlights of this section include a vast hardwood forest affording great fall colors; stands of large, healthy hemlocks; countless tumbling creeks (in season); far-reaching views from Mountain; Lawson walking in the presence of wild elk; and, as on Section 3, splendid isolation.

## Road Approaches and Parking

The trailhead for the northern terminus of this section is on Norma Road in Scott County. To reach this location from I-75, take Exit 141, TN-63, and go west towards Huntsville. Cross into Scott County and travel a total of 11.2 miles to Norma Road. Norma Road begins on the left, directly across from the closed Victory Lane Market & Deli (a former Shell service station). A landmark on the left (south) side of TN-63 is a large sign for Rector's Saw Shop. Follow Norma Road 7.8 miles south past the village of Norma to the Cumberland Trail crossing. Note the wooden steps and "Cumberland Trail" signs on both sides of the road. Parking space for several vehicles is the dirt pull-off area on the west side of the road near the trail crossing. In addition to this parking area, a private home owner will allow parking on his property. The owner's residence is a brown wooden two-story house with two ponds, also located on the west side of Norma Road just north of the dirt pull-off area. To contact the home owner about parking (required), please call Miss Linda Ward at 423-663-9191.

To reach the Norma Road trailhead from Oak Ridge, follow TN-62 to its intersection with TN-116. Turn right and proceed northeast past Brushy Mountain State Prison, Moore's Camp, and Rosedale to an intersection near Stainville--a total of 16.0 miles. Here, at a "T" intersection with no road signs, TN-116 changes direction dramatically and heads southeast toward Laurel Grove and Walden Ridge. Do not follow it! Instead, turn left onto gravel New River Road and proceed north along the New River. At 2.9 miles New River Road comes to a "T" intersection; go left. Proceed a total of 8.8 miles on New River Road to Smoky Junction--the confluence of Smoky Creek and New River. The most important landmark in Smoky Junction is Hembree's Grocery, on the left. New River Road now becomes Norma Road and is somewhat improved. Continue north on Norma Road 2.2 miles from Hembree's to the Cumberland Trail crossing. Note the wooden steps and "Cumberland Trail" signs on both sides of the road.

The trailhead for the southern terminus of this section is on Smoky Creek Road. To reach it from the Norma Road trailhead, drive south on Norma Road 2.2 miles to Hembree's Grocery. Turn right just after Hembree's onto paved Smoky Creek Road. Proceed a total of 4.6 miles, passing the valleys of Bowling Branch and Lowe Branch on the right, to the Cumberland Trail crossing at Cave Branch. The trailhead is on the right, with parking for several cars. (The village of Hembree is another 1.3 miles; if you reach it, you've gone too far.)

## Campsites; Water Availability

There are no designated backcountry campsites on this section. However, backpackers who know and practice Leave No Trace principles may consider camping at the flat area just south of Bowling Town Road, Mile 5.4. Please treat all drinking water, and be aware that creeks on this section may be dry between June and October.

## Miles N to S (Miles S to N) Trail Feature

### Mile 0.0 (9.8) Norma Road Trailhead

Leave the trailhead heading west, proceed gently downhill and cross the railroad tracks, then turn left onto a gravel road. Follow it a short distance to the concrete bridge across the New River, elevation 1,240 feet.

### Mile 0.2 (9.6) Concrete Bridge over New River

After crossing the New River, follow the road to the trail junction on the right. Proceed upstream roughly parallel to the road, gaining elevation via three switchbacks. Cross a small creek on a log bridge and, in another 1/3 mile, cross a ravine on a larger bridge.

### Mile 0.6 (9.2) Log Bridge over Small Ravine

Continuing upstream, cross two gravel roads, then descend a set of terraced steps and cross an old dirt road. Begin to head up the Lick Creek watershed and arrive at the Lower Lick Creek Bridge.

### Mile 1.0 (8.8) Lower Lick Creek Bridge

Cross the bridge and ascend gradually on river right of Lick Creek.

### **Mile 1.5 (8.3) Upper Lick Creek Bridge**

Note the small waterfall while crossing the bridge. Proceed to an old logging road and veer left. Ascend very gradually through a pleasant forest along river left of Lick Creek. Arrive at a gravel road.

### **Mile 2.0 (7.8) Gravel Road**

Turn left and follow the road for 50 yards to a junction with trail on the right. The trail soon merges with a dirt road. Continue upstream, merge with a gravel road and, after 70 yards, leave the gravel to the left. Proceed upstream on trail parallel to the road.

### **Mile 2.4 (7.4) Old Logging Road**

Cross an old logging road. Below, a staging area for logging is visible. Ascend a moderate grade through two sharp left turns, then on sidehill trail through pleasant hardwood forest. After a series of tight switchbacks, reach the summit ridge of Lawson Mountain, elevation ~2,404 feet.

### **Mile 3.2 (6.6) Summit Ridge of Lawson Mountain**

An old road extends over two miles along the top of the mountain, an area leveled by coal mining but now recovering. An overlook lies about 3/4 mile to the right, on the side of Lick Creek Mountain. From here one has an expansive view eastward over the New River valley and mountains beyond. To continue on the trail, turn left at the junction and follow blazed posts for one mile along the road as far as a signpost on the left.

### **Mile 4.2 (5.6) Junction, Trail & Road**

Turn left off the road onto trail built upon mine tailings, elevation 2,583 feet. This area is now a pleasant field, probably used by wildlife. After 0.1 mile, re-enter the woods on sidehill trail, then descend steeply via switchbacks toward the valley of Bowling Branch. The descent moderates after crossing an old logging road. After tunneling through a laurel thicket and passing a beaver pond on the left, arrive at gravel Bowling Town Road, elevation 1,755 feet.

### **Mile 5.1 (4.7) East Junction, Trail & Bowling Town Road**

Turn right and begin a gradual ascent westward on the road. Pass a beaver pond on the right and a faint old road on the left. After 0.3 miles, turn left off the road onto trail.

### **Mile 5.4 (4.4) West Junction, Trail & Bowling Town Road**

Immediately cross a small creek and continue over nearly level trail through a pleasant forest of hemlock with abundant mountain laurel. Approach a larger creek on the left, then veer away from it toward the west through a forest of maple, poplar, and beech. Approach another creek on the right just before turning left and beginning the ascent of the ridge dividing the Bowling Branch and Cave Branch watersheds.

### **Mile 5.8 (4.0) Creek and Break in Grade**

Ascend, steeply in places, on sidehill trail via curving turns and switchbacks. Cross three small creeks on large stepping stones. The forest is dominated by maple, and in many places the slope is covered with ferns. Curve to the right around a huge, isolated boulder whose flat top supports a thriving plant community.

### **Mile 6.1 (3.7) Verdant Boulder**

The moderate-to-steep uphill grade continues for another 1/2 mile, with several more large, isolated boulders that evidently tumbled from the rocky spine of the ridge above. After two more creek crossings, pass directly beneath the spine and reach the top of the ridge, elevation 2,567 feet.

### **Mile 6.6 (3.2) Northwest End of Ridge Traverse**

The view of the rocks to the northwest is impressive, as are the autumn colors. Begin a pleasant traverse eastward along the ridge. Soon arrive beneath a huge boulder with a slightly smaller one on top.

### **Mile 6.7 (3.1) Stacked Boulders**

Continue along the ridge for another 1/2 mile with little change in elevation. Arrive at the southeast end of the traverse, elevation 2,626 feet.

### **Mile 7.2 (2.6) Southeast End of Ridge Traverse**

Turn right and begin the descent south into the valley of Cave Branch via switchbacks and curving turns. The grade is often steep, especially near the top, then moderates, affording opportunity to enjoy the forest dominated by large maple, poplar, and beech. Arrive at an overlook of a deep ravine with a seasonal waterfall.

### **Mile 7.8 (2.0) Deep Ravine with Waterfall**

Continue descending, steeply in places. Cross an old log skidding route that heads straight down the fall line. A 10-step rock staircase marks a break in the overall grade. Proceed above and roughly parallel to Cave Branch through a nice stand of hemlocks. An old logging road crosses the trail and descends to join another along Cave Branch which is rough, muddy, and often flooded in places.

### **Mile 8.3 (1.5) Old Logging Road**

Cross a seasonal creek on large stepping stones. Continue over fairly level but rocky terrain covered with ferns. Veer left to the head of a ravine with a small waterfall, follow a sinuous path through huge boulders, then descend moderately to join the old road along Cave Branch.

### **Mile 8.7 (1.1) Upper Junction, Trail & Cave Branch Road**

Turn left and walk 282 yards to a set of steps on the left.

### **Mile 8.8 (1.0) Lower Junction, Trail & Cave Branch Road**

Climb the steps and continue above and roughly parallel to Cave Branch. Ascend and descend numerous times over the next 0.6 mile. Finally, reach the Cave Branch road again.

### **Mile 9.4 (0.4) Cave Branch Crossing**

Turn left onto the road. After 63 yards leave the road on the right and carefully cross the stream on large flat rocks. Ascend gradually, then proceed on fairly level sidehill trail through a mixed forest containing some very large, healthy hemlocks. With the creek visible below, this is a particularly attractive stretch. Cross an ATV road running down the fall line, descend a 6-rock staircase, and enter a clearing.

### **Mile 9.8 (0.0) Smoky Creek Road Trailhead**

This is also the northern terminus of Section 1 of the New River Segment--the Arch Mountain Section--which begins across Smoky Creek Road.

## **Section 3:**

## **ANDERSON AND CROSS MOUNTAINS**

**17.2 Miles**

## Overview

From its northern terminus at Cove Lake State Park, the trail climbs almost 2,000 feet in 5 miles to the top of Cross Mountain, the highest point on the Cumberland Trail. This is followed by a 1,500-foot descent to campsites on Montgomery Fork and Green's Branch. The trail then ascends through the hardwood forest on McCory Ridge to two beautiful meadows on Anderson Mountain. The descent into the valley of the New River is more gradual than the initial ascent, and offers the prospect of a cool swim afterwards. Highlights of this section include a spectacular display of wildflowers in April; the possibility of observing wild elk; wonderful views in all directions; increasingly rare dark night sky; and a real sense of isolation.

## Road Approaches and Parking

The trailhead for the northern terminus of this section is a paved parking area located on the west side of Cove Lake State Park on Bruce Gap Road. Take I-75 to Caryville (Exit 134). On the west side of I-75, turn right onto Old Highway 63. Pass the Shoney's restaurant and the Caryville Library and Fire Department and proceed a total of 0.5 mile to the intersection with Bruce Gap Road (also known as Butter and Egg Road). Turn right onto Bruce Gap Road, pass under I-75, and cross over the Cove Creek Bridge to the trailhead parking lot on the left.

The trailhead for the southern terminus of this section is on Norma Road in Scott County. To reach this location from I-75, take Exit 141, TN-63, and go west towards Huntsville. Cross into Scott County and travel a total of 11.2 miles to Norma Road. Norma Road begins on the left, directly across from the closed Victory Lane Market & Deli (a former Shell service station). A landmark on the left (south) side of TN-63 is a large sign for Rector's Saw Shop. Follow Norma Road 7.8 miles south past the village of Norma to the Cumberland Trail crossing. Note the wooden steps and "Cumberland Trail" signs on both sides of the road. Parking space for several vehicles is the dirt pull-off area on the west side of the road near the trail crossing. In addition to this parking area, a private home owner will allow parking on his property. The owner's residence is a brown wooden two-story house with two ponds, also located on the west side of Norma Road just north of the dirt pull-off area. It might be possible for the home owner to provide shuttle service for a fee. To contact the home owner about parking (required) or shuttle service, please call Miss Linda Ward at 423-663-9191.

Total distance of the shuttle between Bruce Gap and Norma Road trailheads is 26 miles; driving time is 30 to 40 minutes one-way.

To reach the Norma Road trailhead from Oak Ridge, follow TN-62 to its intersection with TN-116. Turn right and proceed northeast past Brushy Mountain State Prison, Moore's Camp, and Rosedale to an intersection near Stainville--a total of 16.0 miles. Here, at a "T" intersection with no road signs, TN-116 changes direction dramatically and heads southeast toward Laurel Grove and Walden Ridge. Do not follow it! Instead, turn left onto gravel New River Road and proceed north along the New River. At 2.9 miles New River Road comes to a "T" intersection; go left. Proceed a total of 8.8 miles on New River Road to Smoky Junction--the confluence of Smoky Creek and New River. The most important landmark in Smoky Junction is Hembree's Grocery, on the left. New River Road now becomes Norma Road and is somewhat improved. Continue north on Norma Road 2.2 miles from Hembree's to the Cumberland Trail crossing. Note the wooden steps and "Cumberland Trail" signs on both sides of the road.

## Campsites; Water Availability

This section has one designated backcountry campsite--at Montgomery Fork. Backpackers who know and practice Leave No Trace principles may also consider camping at Green's Branch. Water can be found all year at these sites and in the New River. Please treat all drinking water!

## Miles N to S (Miles S to N) Trail Feature

### Mile 0.0 (17.2) Bruce Gap Trailhead

Follow the trail from the back of the paved lot to a trail junction. The Cumberland Mountain Segment begins on the right. Turn left onto the New River Segment. Follow the old road a short distance to the I-75 Cove Creek overpass, cross under I-75, bear right, and proceed northwest along Cove Creek to the 88-foot Cove Creek Bridge.

### **Mile 0.8 (16.4) Cove Creek Bridge**

After crossing the bridge, turn left, parallel the creek, then cross paved Old Highway 63. Climb to the railroad tracks, then turn right and follow the tracks for 200 feet. Turn left and ascend a rock staircase to a kiosk. The trail ascends via switchbacks through woods that--in March and April--contain spectacular fields of trillium. Reach Adkins Branch Falls.

### **Mile 1.1 (16.1) Adkins Branch Falls**

After enjoying the falls, climb through a rock garden to a ridge top covered with mountain laurel. Rock hop across Adkins Branch, climb a rock staircase, and reach a dirt road.

### **Mile 1.5 (15.7) Dirt Road**

Follow the dirt road straight ahead for 175 feet watching for evidence of historic coal mining, then turn sharply right into the woods. Soon ascend a set of terrace steps and turn sharply right onto the old Royal Blue cable railroad bed. Follow the railroad bed for 0.3 mile, then turn sharply left into the woods. After a series of switchbacks and steps, reach Duncan Falls.

### **Mile 3.1 (14.1) Duncan Falls**

A formation called Panther Rock lies at the base of Duncan Falls, and Overhang Rock is positioned 0.2 miles further. Then approach the "Tennessee Coal Dunes".

### **Mile 3.4 (13.8) Tennessee Coal Dunes**

These "dunes" are tailings from historic coal mine operations. Proceed across the dunes, cross a small stream, and switchback up to dirt Tower Road just below the crest of Cross Mountain. A sign announces "2.9 to Montgomery Fork."

### **Mile 4.1 (13.1) Tower Road**

Turn right onto the road, then ascend a rock staircase on the left to return to the woods. The next mile is extremely rich in wildflowers, including geranium, may apple, little brown jug, trillium, Solomon's Seal (real and false), blue cohosh, violet, wood sorrel, trailing arbutus, bloodroot, rue anemone and a host of others. Wind around the end of the ridge and pass a wonderful overlook. Approach 3,000 feet in elevation--the highest point on the Cumberland Trail and around 2,000 feet above the Bruce Gap Trailhead.

### **Mile 4.9 (12.3) Summit of Cross Mountain**

Continue winding along the ridge, cross the crest of Big Bruce Ridge, and descend through a rock garden. Descend a rock staircase and turn sharply right onto an old roadbed. At this point, the trail begins its descent into the Montgomery Fork watershed. In 0.4 mile, enter a strip mine cut and reach gravel Mine No. 10 Road.

### **Mile 5.9 (11.3) Gravel Road (Mine No. 10 Road)**

Turn right onto the road and walk 100 feet, then turn sharply left back into the woods. Negotiate another descent along a strip mine cut towards Montgomery Fork. This dry hillside has an abundance of flame azalea and mountain laurel, along with specimens of white and black oak, pignut hickory, and sugar maple. Finally, reach a spur trail to the Montgomery Fork backcountry campsite.

### **Mile 7.1 (10.1) Spur Trail to Backcountry Campsite**

To reach the campsite, follow the spur trail a short distance to several nice level tent sites on a bench near the creek. Otherwise, continue on the main trail to Montgomery Fork.

### **Mile 7.2 (10.0) Montgomery Fork**

Cross the creek, climb a bit, then proceed roughly parallel to Montgomery Fork. Ascend slightly, then descend to Spring Branch.

### **Mile 7.8 (9.4) Spring Branch**

Cross Spring Branch, ascend to the 1,700 ft contour, and again parallel Montgomery Fork to the Greens Branch Bridge.

### **Mile 9.7 (7.5) Green's Branch Bridge**

Cross the bridge and turn left. A flat area for possible backcountry camping is located on a small hill to the right, above the trail. Begin the ascent of McCory Ridge and Anderson Mountain. Reach a dirt road.

### **Mile 9.9 (7.3) Dirt Road**

Turn left onto a dirt road and proceed for about 0.2 mile. Turn right up a rock staircase, then turn right again and continue up the slope of McCory Ridge. This is an attractive stretch through a hardwood forest with many wonderful views of the surrounding valleys and mountaintops; an elk sighting is possible.

### **Mile 11.9 (5.3) Lower Anderson Meadow, E End**

Emerge from the woods at the edge of the meadow, turn right and head in a westerly direction, following the blazes painted on posts. Notice the rock face (a "high wall") on the left. This area is the remnant of a coal mining operation that removed the top of the mountain. This meadow has been reclaimed and planted with vegetation for elk and other wildlife. Proceed west, skirting the northern edge of the meadow.

### **Mile 12.3 (4.9) Lower Anderson Meadow, W End**

Turn right, reenter the woods, and climb to the upper Anderson Mountain meadow.

### **Mile 12.6 (4.6) Upper Anderson Meadow, E End**

This meadow is also the result of removing the top of the mountain to mine a coal seam. There are many wondrous views of the surrounding mountains. The wind turbines on Buffalo Mountain can also be seen. Follow the post-blazes across the field to its northwest corner, then exit on a road bed.

### **Mile 13.1 (4.1) Upper Anderson Meadow, W End**

Travel the road downhill for about 300 feet, then turn left off of the road. (Watch for the double blazes indicating the turn.) After traveling across a wooded ridge, veer left off of the ridge and switchback down to a gravel ATV road. Turn right and follow the road as far as a gap and road crossing.

### **Mile 13.8 (3.4) Gap and Crossroads**

Turn left at the sign post in the gap. Re-enter the woods and follow a strip mine bench. Notice the "high wall" on your right. This stretch also offers many spectacular views of the Cumberland Mountains. After the strip mine bench, emerge onto an old roadbed. Follow this road until re-entering the strip mine bench.

### **Mile 14.5 (2.7) Strip Mine Bench**

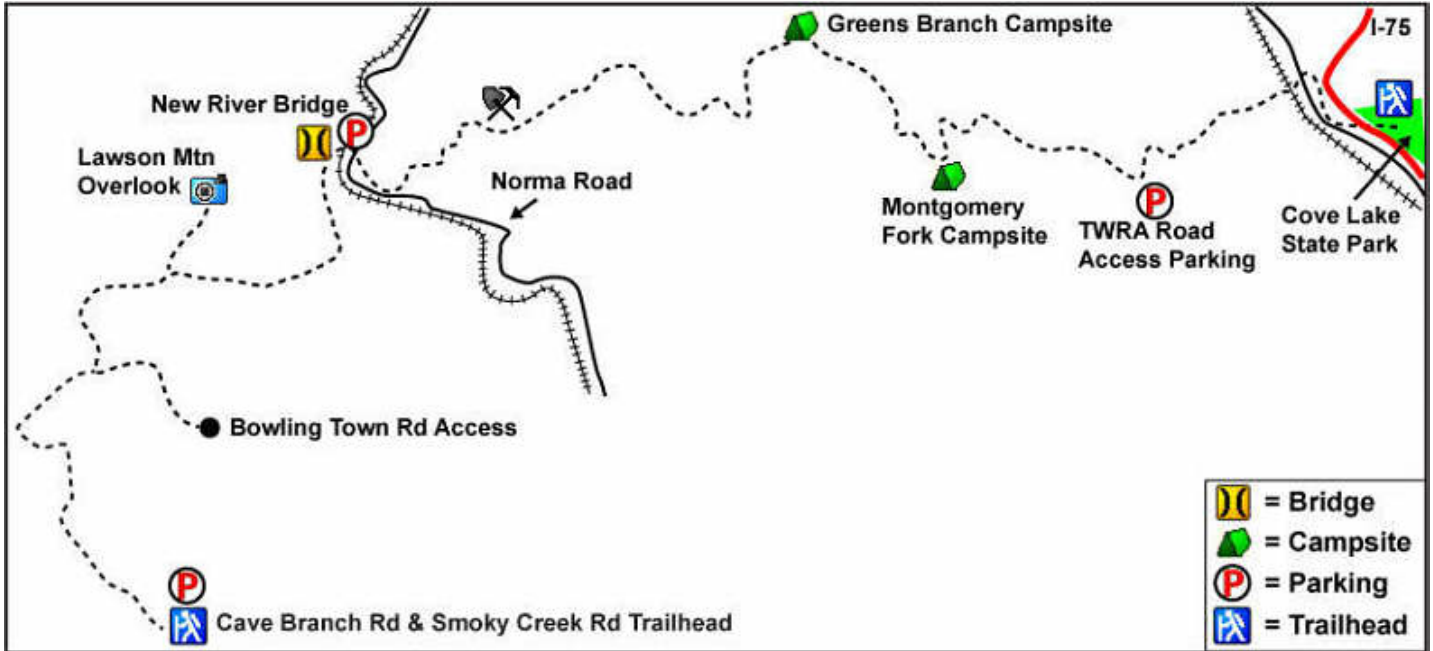
Follow the strip mine bench and begin descending Anderson Mountain into the valley of the New River. Leave the strip mine bench to the left (do not follow the gravel ATV road).

### **Mile 15.4 (1.8) ATV Road**

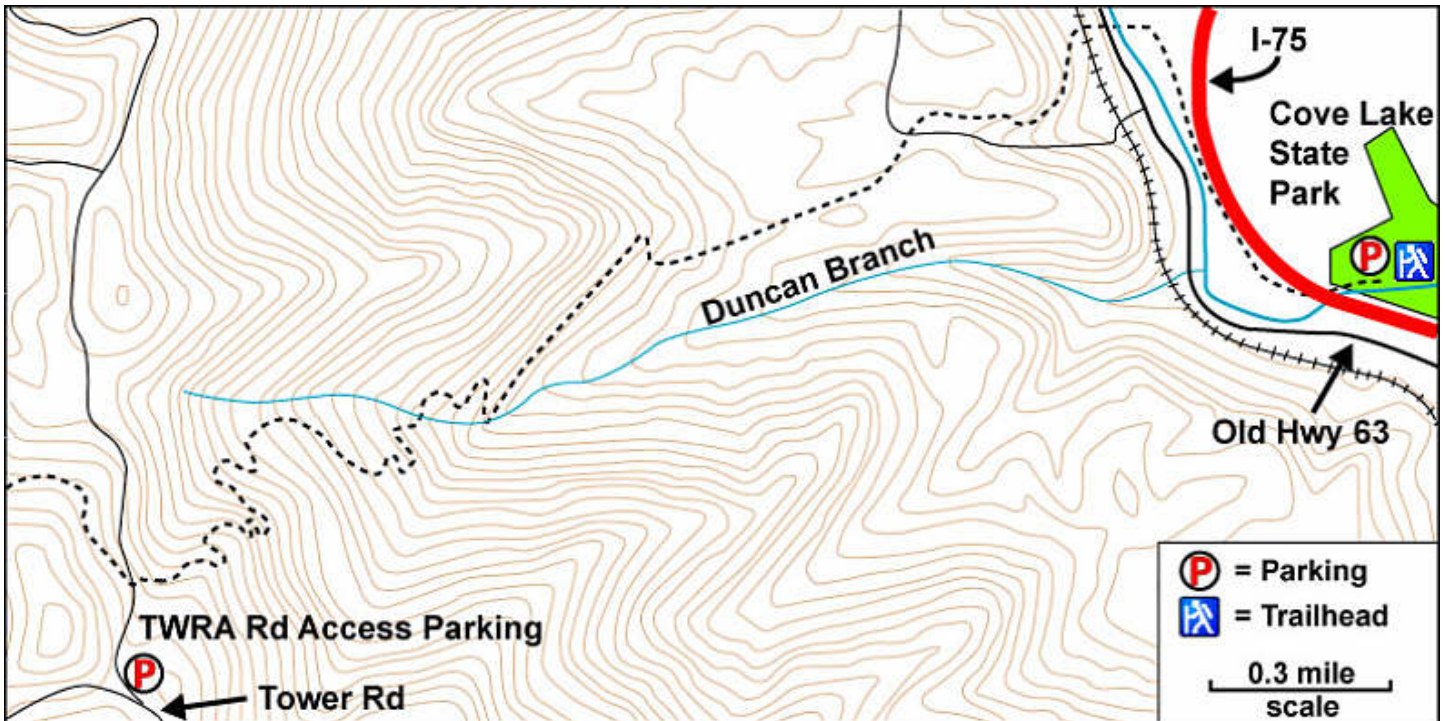
Proceed down the mountain via several switchbacks and rock staircases to Norma Road and the southern terminus of the section.

### Mile 17.2 (0.0) Norma Road Trailhead

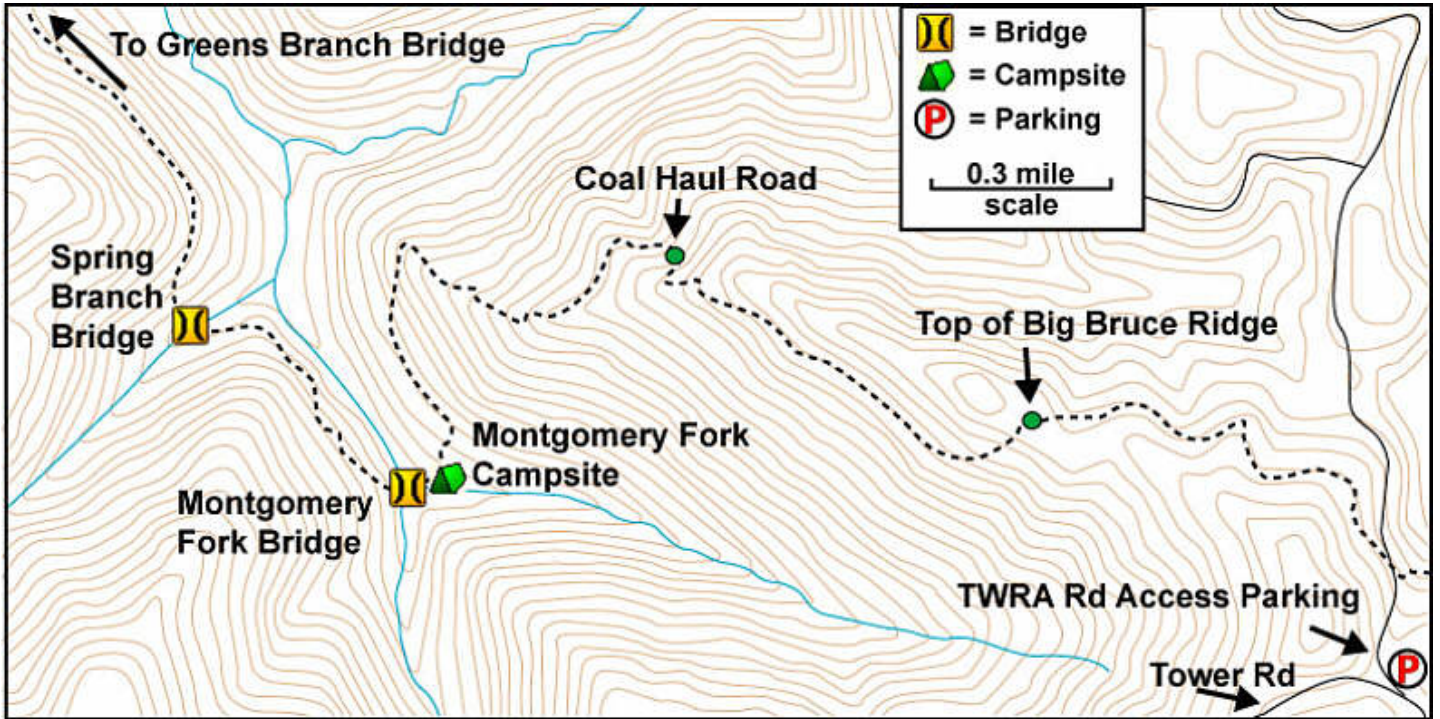
This is also the northern terminus of Section 2 of the New River Segment--the Lawson Mountain Section. To enjoy a dip in the cool water of the New River, cross Norma Road and follow the trail 0.2 miles to a concrete bridge over the river.



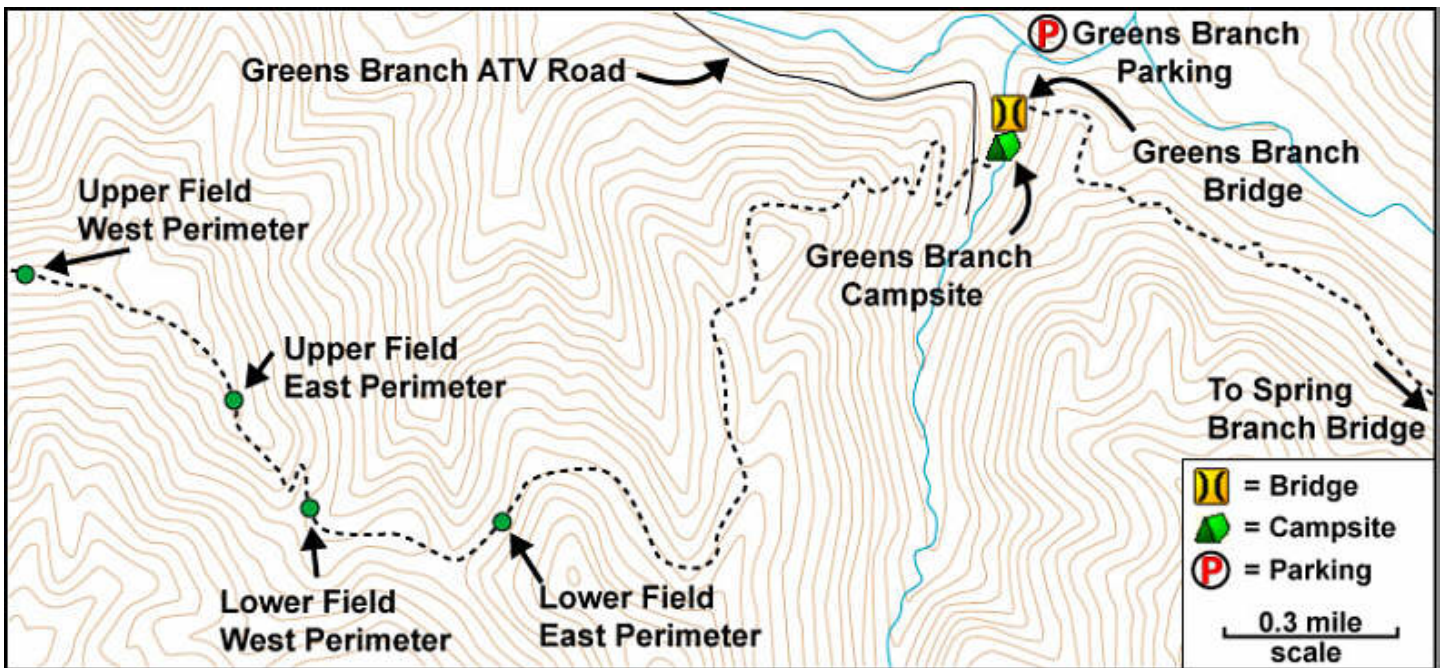
Map Contributed by Trail Volunteer Don Deakins  
**HIKEABLE NEW RIVER SEGMENT TRAIL**  
Bruce Gap Trailhead to Bowling Town Road



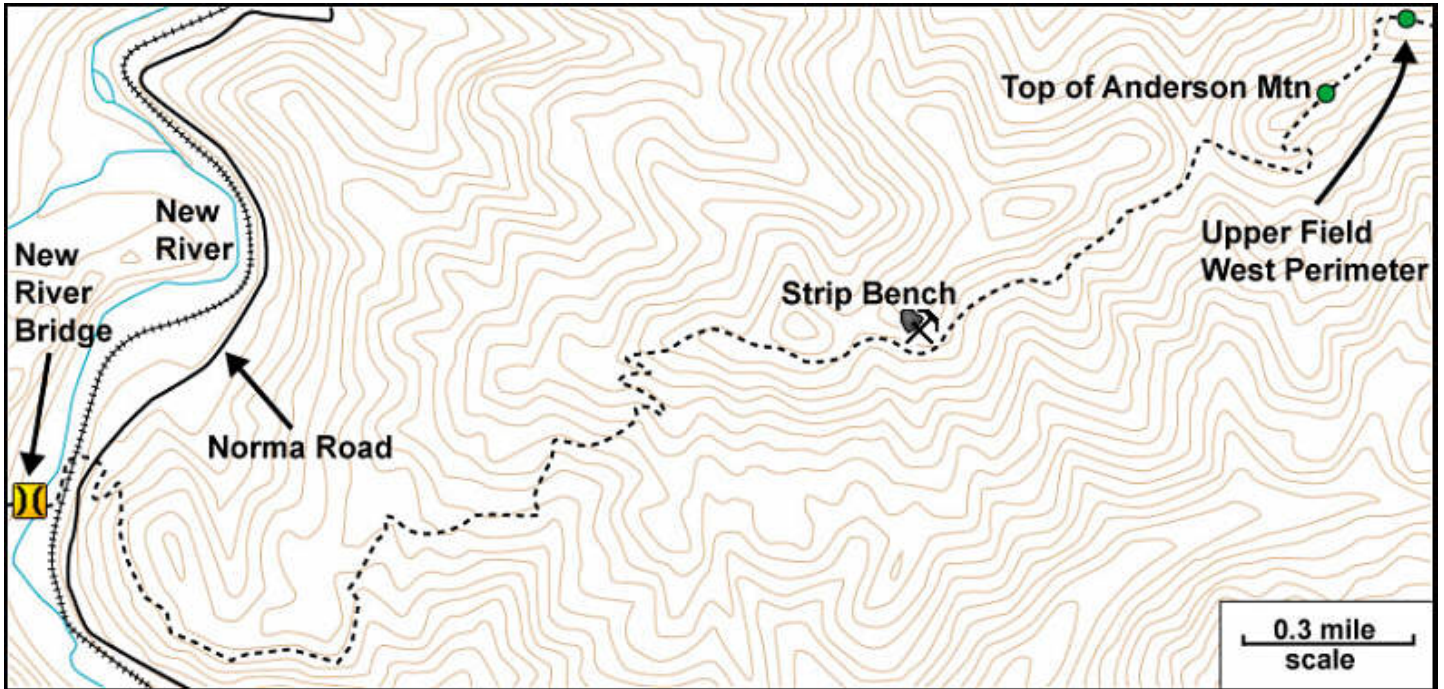
Map Contributed by Trail Volunteer Don Deakins  
**COVE LAKE TRAILHEAD TO TOWER RD PARKING ACCESS ROAD**



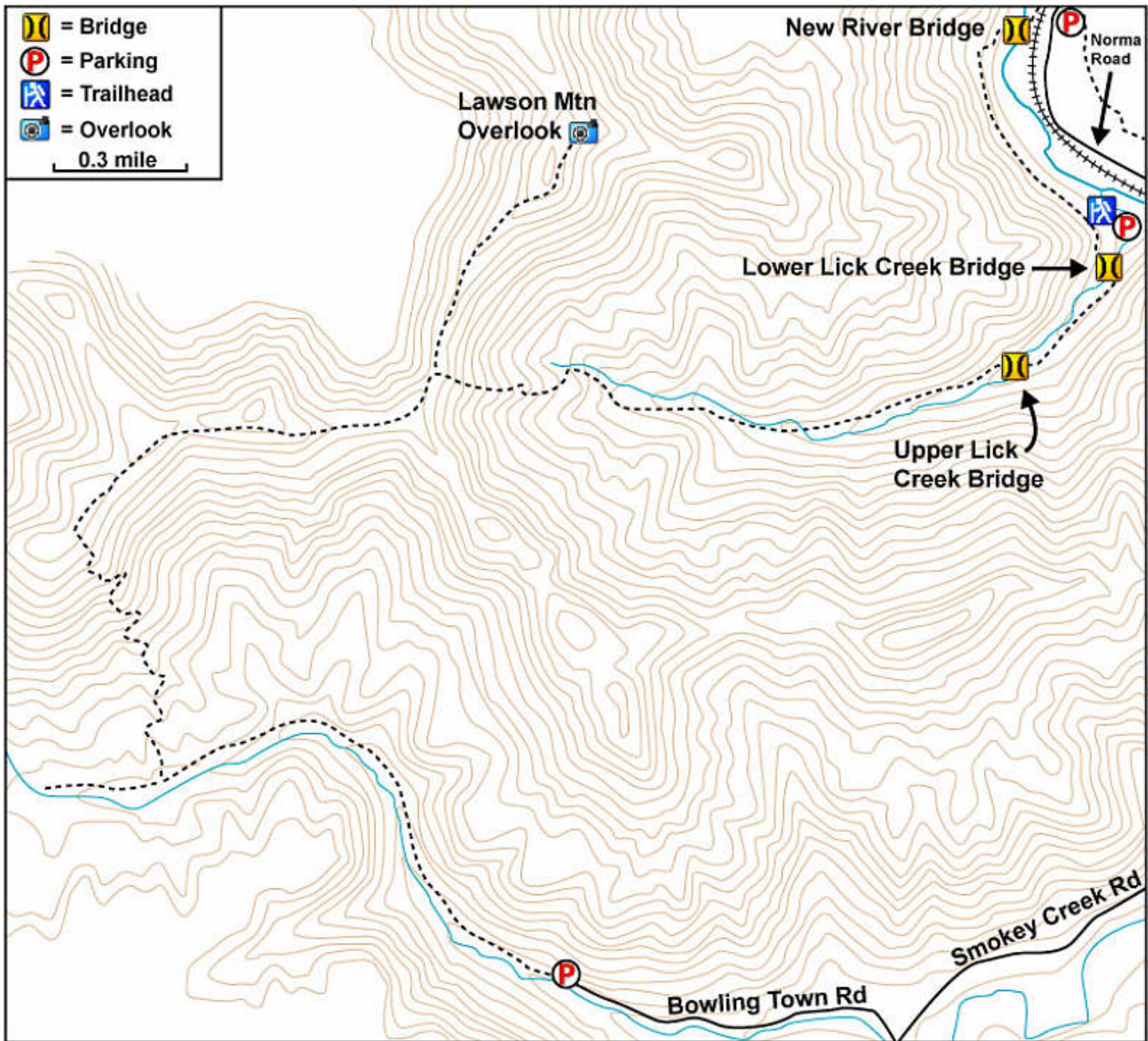
Map Contributed by Trail Volunteer Don Deakins  
**TOWER RD PARKING ACCESS TO SPRING BRANCH BRIDGE**



Map Contributed by Trail Volunteer Don Deakins  
**MAP FROM SPRING BRANCH BRIDGE TO FEEDING FIELD**



Map Contributed by Trail Volunteer Don Deakins  
**MAP FROM FEEDING FIELD TO NORMA RD CROSSING**



Map Contributed by Trail Volunteer Don Deakins  
**MAP OF NEW RIVER BRIDGE TO BOWLING TOWN ROAD**



Map Contributed by Trail Volunteer Don Deakins

**MAP OF BOWLING TOWN ROAD TO SMOKEY CREEK ROAD**

### GPS Readings For Important Points

Location	GPS Waypoint
Top of Cross Mountain	N36 18.224 W84 16.481
Mine #10 gravel road	N36 18.437 W84 17.137
Montgomery Fork campsite	N36 18.130 W84 17.500
Montgomery Fork bridge	N36 18.147 W84 17.590
Spring Branch bridge	N36 18.345 W84 17.970
Greens Branch bridge	N36 19.114 W84 18.921
Greens Branch campsite	N36 19.085 W84 18.945
Anderson Mountain lower field east side	N36 18.498 W84 19.867
Anderson Mountain lower field west side	N36 18.527 W84 20.219
Anderson Mountain upper field east side	N36 18.679 W84 20.349
Anderson Mountain upper field west side	N36 18.874 W84 20.220
Norma Road crossing	N36 18.211 W84 23.147
New River bridge	N36 18.141 W84 23.249