

The Tankerhoosen

Welcome to the Tankerhoosen River Valley, one of Connecticut's Officially Designated Greenways. The DEEP says, "The Tankerhoosen River is one of the most important watercourses within the Connecticut and Hockanum River Watersheds."

'Tankerhoosen' is from the Indian 'Watunkshanoos'e'. 'Watunkshan' denotes a rapid and winding stream, and 'oos'e' means 'towards'; thus 'towards the fast flowing and winding stream' referring to the Hockanum River.

The Tankerhoosen River watershed is a 12.9 square mile drainage basin within the Hockanum River watershed. Approximately 70% lies within the Town of Vernon.

Although the river is only a little over five miles long the history, scenery, trail system and parks are unique in the way they are connected. Other towns have wonderful parks and great history, but in none are they connected as they are in Vernon; and the river running through it is the connector. Here you can hike, bike, swim, picnic, fish and visit outdoor museums without leaving the Greenway.

Large sections are owned and preserved by the CT Department of Energy & Environmental Protection, while other tracts are part of the Northern Connecticut Land Trust or owned by the town. Exploring the area will bring you to natural features, historical sites and garden delights. Visitors are surprised at the richness of the area.

This brochure will help you explore the valley. It highlights a sampling of twelve locations from the headwaters of the Tankerhoosen River to its merger with the Hockanum. The selected sites are connected south to north by the Shenipsit Trail and east to west by the Hop River Rail Trail. There are places to hike, bike, swim, fish, hunt or explore our 300 year history.

Enjoy our valley, take only pictures and memories, and leave it as you found it for its next visitor.

Tankerhoosen Valley Resources

Learn more about the Tankerhoosen Valley, its features, history and activities taking place, including hikes.

Website – Includes sections on geography, history, recreation and resources as well as Vernon Park & Rec Trail Maps. Explore the valley at Tankerhoosen.info.

On the website you'll also find links to our Blog, Newsletter, MeetUp and Facebook Page.

Activities – Upcoming activities in the Tankerhoosen Valley, along with other selected Vernon events, will be found at VernonVolunteers.org under the 'Events' tab.

MeetUp - To receive email notice and reminders of activities on the Vernon Volunteers site join our Making Vernon Special MeetUp at MeetUp.com/ Making-Vernon-Special.

Companion Webpage

A webpage has been designed to supplement this brochure with more detail on each of the 12 sites including directions and parking information.



Included are links to sites or pages with additional history or detail. Scan the QR Code or go to tankerhoosen.info/brochure.



An Outdoor Guide To THE TANKERHOOSEN VERNON'S GREEN VALLEY



The Tankerhoosen Valley, roughly the southern half of Vernon, is a hidden gem for outdoor exploration, biking and hiking.

Visit a dozen sites in the 6-mile valley connected by two major trails.

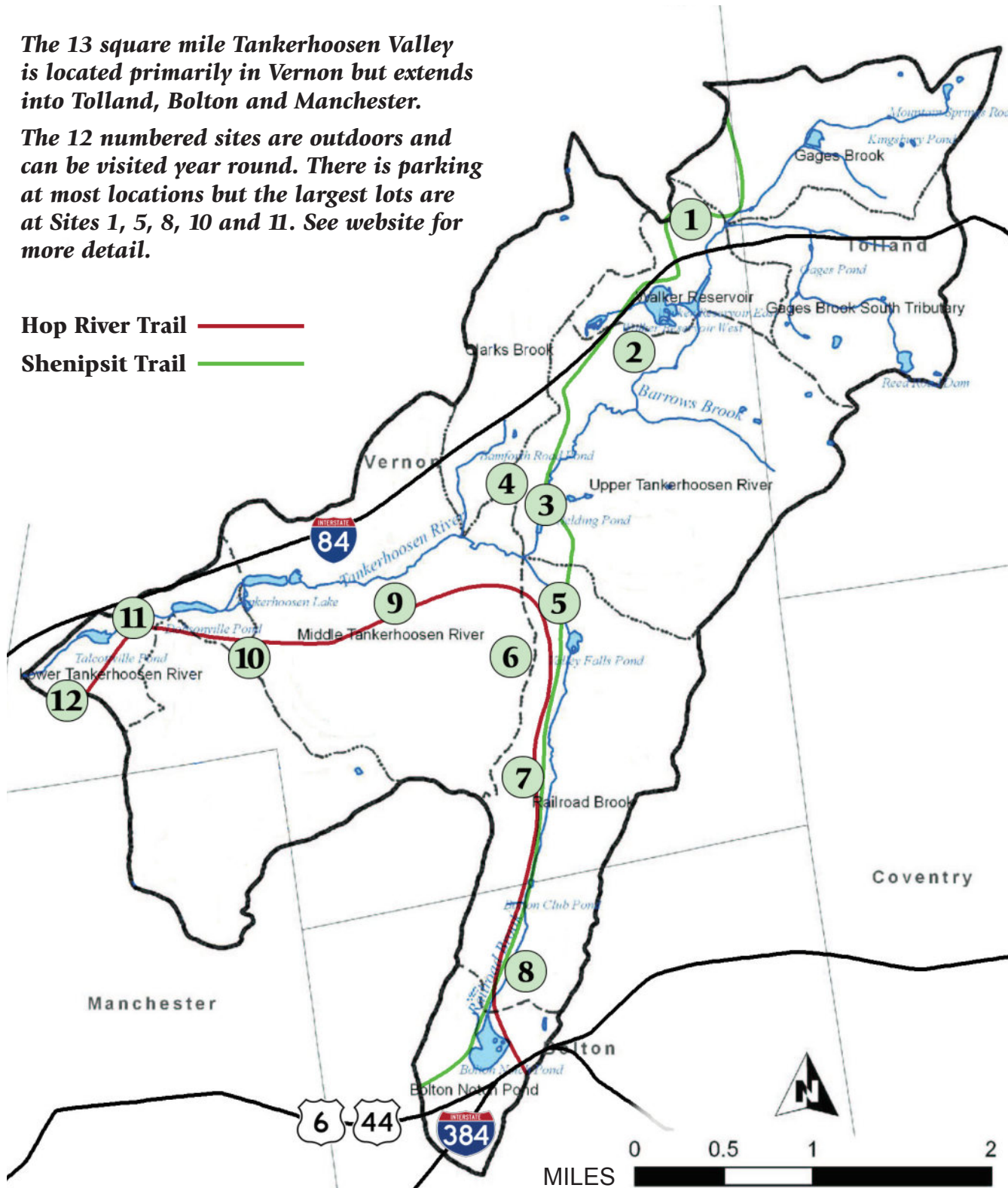
Tankerhoosen.info

The 13 square mile Tankerhoosen Valley is located primarily in Vernon but extends into Tolland, Bolton and Manchester.

The 12 numbered sites are outdoors and can be visited year round. There is parking at most locations but the largest lots are at Sites 1, 5, 8, 10 and 11. See website for more detail.

Hop River Trail ———

Shenipsit Trail ———



1. Tolland County Agricultural Center

TCAC is home to a number of agriculturally related organizations, hosting throughout the year many outdoor activities



including the August 4-H fair. On its 55-acre property are experimental gardens, a flower labyrinth, the historic Gunther farm, and a variety of trails including a portion of the Shenipsit Trail.

Under appreciated by those looking for an outdoor experience, the property is open to the public and can be explored for hours with new surprises in every corner.

Located at 24 Hyde Avenue (Route 30).

2. Tankerhoosen WMA

The CT DEEP Tankerhoosen Wildlife Management Area on Reservoir Road is a 450-acre parcel acquired in 2012



from the Bissell family. At the eastern end are the Walker Reservoirs and the dam that marks the formal beginning of the Tankerhoosen River. This area is one of the two Class 1 trout streams in Eastern CT. This WMA is popular for fishing and permits hunting in season.

Shenipsit Trail follows the northern edge of the property. There is no formal trail along the river preserving its beauty, but old mill sites, pine forests and cascading falls can be explored.

3. Belding Wildlife Management Area

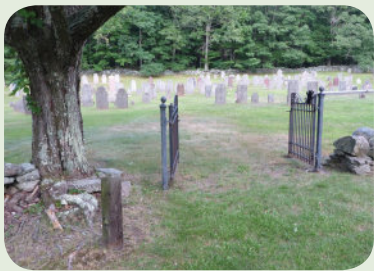
Downstream and adjacent to the Tankerhoosen WMA is the 300-acre Belding WMA. This parcel was donated to the state by the Belding family in 2005. Many hiking trails are marked, including the Shenipsit Trail.



This WMA includes three dams, a pond and two small streams tumbling down the mountain into the Tankerhoosen. There is no hunting in this area so it is safe to enjoy the pine forests, river, flower meadow and butterfly garden year round.

4. Old Burial Ground Of North Bolton

Adjacent to the Belding WMA is Vernon’s oldest cemetery, the Old Burial Ground of North Bolton. The first burial was in 1751 and last in 1851.



Today it’s a picturesque site where our earliest settlers, including many Revolutionary War soldiers, are buried.

According to legend the cemetery was established at this place when one of Captain Moses Thrall’s sons fell from a wagon and died.

This is a beautiful spot to visit, sit on the stone wall on a cool evening and enjoy the tranquility. It’s also a favorite for rubbing the old inscriptions.

9. Hop River Rail-Trail

The Hop River Rail-Trail follows the old rail line from Manchester through Vernon and Bolton to Willimantic.



The trail is a favorite for hikers, joggers and bikers and is about five miles from Talcottville to Bolton Notch. Vernon Depot on Church Street is a convenient place to park and access the trail. The trail winds through Talcott Ravine, the Belding WMA, Valley Falls Park, the Webster Preserve and Bolton Notch State Park. Beautiful scenery with rock outcroppings much of the way.

A spur off the trail at Vernon Depot leads to Rockville past Tankerhoosen Lake and the Rail Trail Mural.

10. Vernon Depot Outdoor Museum

When the railroad was constructed in 1848 Vernon Depot became an important station servicing the mills at Dobsonville and Rockville. A village grew around the station which became Vernon’s first post office.



Railroad enthusiasts have researched the area and created an outdoor museum with interpretive signs. The site of main buildings and turntable are marked and photos show trains, structures, events and people from the time.

Park at the Church Street Rail-Trail entrance. Signs are along the trail and overlook the Dobson Mills and Talcott Ravine.

5. Valley Falls Park & Farm

Town owned Valley Falls Park is 193-acres and includes a pond for fishing, skating, picnicking and swimming in season. Extending along Railroad Brook to Bolton are over 8 miles of trails including parts of the Shenipsit and Hop River Trails.



From Valley Falls you can follow north-south or east- west trails that cover the whole of the Tankerhoosen Valley. The park is at the junction of the Belding WMA, Webster Preserve and Bolton Notch preserves and trails. Also on the property are remnants of Vernon’s first mill, the Sharps Trout Farm and a Braille Trail.

Just up the hill from the park is Valley Falls Farm owned by the Friends of Valley Falls. This picturesque gentlemen’s farm has been owned by a number of interesting people and is open for tours during summer months.

6. Webster Preserve

Northern Connecticut Land Trust’s 30-acre Webster Preserve is located above the Rail Trail at Valley Falls. The ridge overlooks Valley Falls Park and Railroad Brook for some beautiful views.



Besides the view, which is shared with the Shenipsit Trail, the site includes rock outcroppings and vernal pools. It’s somewhat remote location offers a quiet hike once you pass the cliffs.

11. Talcott Ravine

At Talcott Ravine the river cut a gorge and was the location of the two Dobson Mills. Remnants of both mills can still be explored. Beyond the ravine the river flows west to Talcottville Pond and beyond to join the Hockanum River.



Talcottville Pond once stored water for the mills, but today is home to a variety of wildlife. The 20-acre preserve, donated by the Talcott family, is owned by the Northern CT Land Trust and is part of a loop hike that includes a section of the Hop River Trail and Talcottville’s Main Street. Park at the end of Main Street.

12. Talcottville Outdoor Museum

The village of Talcottville is on the National Historic Register. Site of the earliest cloth mill in Vernon the town grew around the mills and became a village owned by the Talcott Family who built housing, a store, library, school, church and a cemetery for their employees. Its main street was cut off by the highway and remains much as it was in the 1800’s.



Signs describe buildings and locations with historical photos. A walk through town is a step back in time.

7. Shenipsit Trail

The CT Forest & Park Association’s Shenipsit Trail extends from Bolton Notch through Vernon and on to Somers in the north. As it passes through Vernon it connects many key areas – Bolton Notch trails, Webster Preserve, Valley Falls Park, the Belding and Tankerhoosen Wildlife Management Areas and the Tolland County Agricultural Center (TCAC).



Hiking the Shenipsit is one way to explore the eastern portion of the Tankerhoosen Valley. The section above the Hop River Rail Trail has views of the Railroad Brook valley. There is a gap in the trail between Walker Reservoir and TCAC requiring crossing under I-84.

8. Bolton Parks & Pond

Railroad Brook originates in a pond near Bolton Notch and flows north to join the Tankerhoosen in the Belding WMA.



The railroad followed this brook and later became the Hop River Rail-Trail. The Shenipsit Trail also follows this small river cut - sometimes on the Rail-Trail and sometimes above it.

Within the town of Bolton and the Tankerhoosen Valley are several trails and parks worth exploring. These include the Tulip Tree Trail on the east bank of the valley, the Mohegan Trail to the top of Bolton Notch, Bolton Notch State Park and Freya Park around the pond. Bikers can also connect with the East Coast Greenway at Bolton Notch.

History of the Valley

Indians lived in the area long before the white man arrived. With their Winter campground at Shenipsit Lake the Podunks fished, hunted and farmed in the Tankerhoosen Valley.

Settlers from Bolton arrived in the early 1700’s with the first saw and grist mill located at Valley Falls. Their first church was built in 1762 on a hill overlooking the valley below. Over the next 50 years many other small mills located along the river.

About 1794 John Warburton established the first cotton mill on the lower Tankerhoosen at today’s Talcottville. This was followed by Peter Dobson’s mills just upstream. Early mill owners were inventors and engineers, designing and building much of their own equipment. Their inventions would be used in the larger mills in Rockville.

The valley was very fertile and farms covered most of its bottom lands. While mostly corn, hay and wheat at times chestnut, and tobacco were exported.

The villages of Dobsonville, Phoenixville and Talcottville grew up around the mills. The railroad arrived in 1848 with a station to support the mills in Vernon and Rockville. Around the station grew the village of Vernon Depot.

Most of the mills thrived into the 20th Century surviving both fires and floods. Mills were rebuilt and expanded until one by one they closed as the depression hit and jobs went south.

The 1940’s brought the Interstate highway parallel to the Tankerhoosen River, and the character of the area slowly changed from a farm and mill to a bedroom community.

Fortunately for our valley Rockville’s Bissell and Belding families bought large tracts of land in the Eastern valley for hunting and fishing, which prevented it from becoming subdivisions. The CT DEEP acquired about 750 acres a few years ago. Land trusts acquired other parcels and the town owns Valley Falls Park thus preserving much of the Greenway.