Flowing to the River Quest

Super Quest 2021: Climate Connections

Quest challenge to reflect on ways in which climate change is affecting the Upper Valley and how our communities are addressing these changes. **Flowing to the River Quest** will take you on a hike to learn about the water of one of the many tributaries of the great Connecticut River – where is comes from, flows to and how protecting its flora keeps these waters clean.

This year’s **Climate Connections Super Quest** examines the ways climate change is affecting the Upper Valley—from plants, insects, and other animals moving here from the south due to warming temperatures; to more frequent and more powerful storms; to people moving here from other places experiencing even greater climate-induced changes. The Super Quest also looks at ways we’re preventing or adapting to climate change, including flood control through land preservation; green energy technologies; and regenerative agricultural practices.

**Norwich, Vermont**
Physical Difficulty: Moderate
Special Features: Natural
Walking Conditions: Trail
Duration: 1 hour one way or 2 hours round trip
Bring: Field Guide, swimsuit

*To get there: Take exit 13 on I-91 into Norwich for .5 mile. Take a left onto Beaver Meadow Road and follow for 1 mile. Take a left onto an unmarked road right before Brigham Hill Rd, and park in the parking lot at end. If you wish to park a second car at the end of the trail, continue*
on Beaver Meadow Rd. for 1.4 miles; there is a small pull off on the left, and trail signs for the Bill Ballard Trail system.

**Clues:**
Start by walking up past the pool
Where the water is fresh and cool
A pleasant place for a picnic and BBQ
And a place to sit and enjoy the flowing view

See the breached dam off to the right
Hurricane Irene came with all her might
A pool was once here for you to swim
But water has a mind of its own and normally wins

Into the trees, a while you will walk
Along the Charles Brown Brook that falls over the rocks
The road on the other side will remain in view
While hemlocks dominate and ferns blanket the ground, too

You will reach an area with many fallen trees
The trees are dead and produce no leaves,
But their spirit lives on as they decay
They help build the soil by recycling their nutrients for the trees today
Above the stream, be careful of the ledge and lose dirt
Knocking down soil harms plant life and aquatic species get hurt

Soon a clearing over-head appears
Transporting power to the houses that are near
Look at the pile of trees and debris across the stream
Another trace of that Hurricane Irene

A blanket of ferns covers the next clearing
Shaded by a thick canopy of conifers and deciduous, the treasure you are nearing,
Look at the succession of the forest while you walk
Conifers become less abundant, such as our fellow hemlock
Deciduous trees such as the oak and maple
Start dominating the trail because they are able
From grass to bush, to conifers, to deciduous
This tells us about the distribution history
Of the stands which we walk through, so they aren’t a complete mystery
Ahead, up and down, to the right is a waterfall created by man
You can see what was once part of a dam
Now look up stream at the grasslands growing
The regeneration of a once flood area is worth noting

Rock stairs lead you up and away from the stream
As it falls away from sight another brook teams
One of the many tributaries that into the Connecticut River does flow
To the Atlantic Ocean, is where that water goes
(Think of all the brooks, leading to all the streams, leading to all the rivers, leading to all of the oceans all over the world, and you will understand why even a little bit of pollution can cause a big mess if each brook was contaminated just slightly.)

Follow the trail as it twists through the trees and snares
Cross five bridges, and up the wooden stairs
While you go, look for the stone walls, a total of three
A result of farmers clearing land and felling trees

The trail straightens for a bit
And a vernal pool is off to the left in a pit
Many brooks come into view
But you want to find where one joins the two

A trail intersection will be just across this brook
Beaver Meadow Rd. is the direction you want to go
At the makeshift bridge, down the flowing brook you look
Two brooks converge into one, making it hard to measure
The trail to your right you must take to find the treasure.

The trail curves back up the hill.
What to the left covered in moss so green
Did storm or man bring down so still?
In between their cracks a treasure box can be seen.

Now back you go, the way you came
Or across the bridge to your 2nd car,
Or on toward a canyon so grand,
Another Quest to tame.
Created by Jonathan Stallsmith in 2006, but had to be totally redone after Hurricane Irene in 2011.

Please be a good steward of the land: leave it better than you found it and pack out any trash you find.

Valley Quest is a collection of 160+ treasure hunts that share and teach the natural gems and cultural heritage of the Upper Valley with children, families, adults, and visitors. It is a program of Vital Communities, a regional nonprofit working to engage citizens, organizations, and communities in creating solutions to our region’s challenges. Learn more at vitalcommunities.org