

Farmington Canal and River Trail

This 3.8 mile trail is a great example of how 2 towns can work together to create an educational loop hike that benefits the mind and body. You will hike over a glacial moraine and lake bed to observe 2 well preserved stone structures built in 1828. The trail is unique because you are able to walk over 0.75 miles in the center of the Farmington Canal, as opposed to just along the towpath. Your chances of seeing wildlife are very good because the trail provides a good combination of habitat: woodlands, open fields, and a mile long river walk.

Off road parking is located on Town Farm Road (41.755372, -72.827853), 0.2 miles south of Sub-Edge Farm. Look for the white Farmington's Open Space sign and the yellow painted blazes that mark the trail. Start hiking heading west up and down the rolling slopes of a glacial moraine.

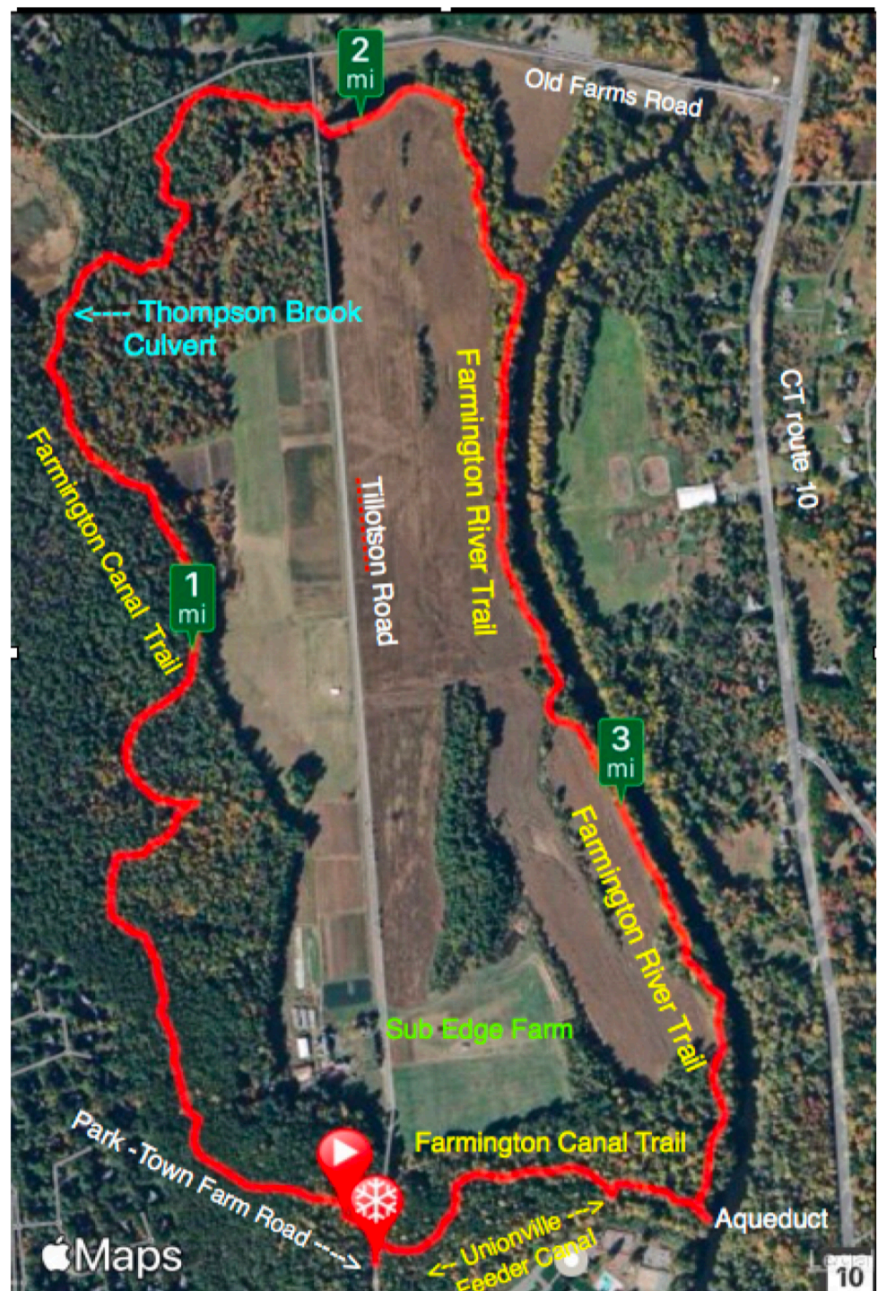
It is important to follow the yellow blazes which avoids the property used by Sub Edge Farm, a working Certified Organic Farm. They have a history also : <https://www.subedgefarm.com/about>

At 0.7 miles turn left onto the Farmington Canal. You will be hiking along the base of the canal in a section known as the "Long Level", 26 miles without any expensive locks. Barges would float at an elevation of 182 feet from Granby to Southington. You will discover that the canal does not go straight, it follows the contour to keep construction costs down. At 1.4 miles use the new wooden bridge to cross over the Thompson Brook Culvert. This well preserved stone arch was built in 1828 because the brook was too low in elevation, so the canal was built over the top of it. After crossing the culvert, the canal continues straight, but the yellow trail turns to the right and reaches Tillotson Road at 1.8 miles. Turn right, then left into Avon's hiking trail parking lot. Follow along the edge of Thompson Brook, avoiding the open fields of the Sub-Edge Farm. These very level fields have extremely rich soil, since this was the bottom of the glacial Lake Farmington.



Thompson Brook Culvert

At 2.3 miles you will pass a bridge to an access trail to the parking lot near Avon's boat launch site. At 2.8 miles, the Farmington River Trail crosses a wide bridge and at 3.4 miles it reaches the "T" junction with the Farmington Canal Trail. Turn left on an unmarked access trail to observe the very well preserved 1828 west abutment of the Farmington Aqueduct. Also look across the river at the east abutment.





Farmington Canal Trail in Avon
0.75 miles with the towpath on the right



Farmington River Trail in Avon
1 mile with a winter view of river and fields

While viewing the west and east abutments, you might want to check these links for additional information: <http://hdl.handle.net/11134/660002:2688> and <http://hdl.handle.net/11134/660002:2689>

Return to the yellow trail, climbing up the steep side of the Farmington Canal's towpath to reach the junction with Unionville Feeder Canal at 3.5 miles which was the main source of water for the Farmington Canal. The dam for the Feeder Canal was located a little over 1 mile downstream from the center of Unionville. Take a walk past the historic marker to get an idea of its size. The Feeder Canal was as wide as the Farmington Canal in Avon because the long term plan was to have it also be a transportation canal that would eventually connect with the Hudson River. The long term plan for the Farmington Canal was to have it continue north into Canada, connecting with the St Lawrence River.

For more information: <http://hdl.handle.net/11134/660002:2683> <http://hdl.handle.net/11134/660002:2691>

Return to the yellow trail that now follows the towpath. At 3.6 miles (if the leaves are off the trees) you can observe a huge kettle hole on your right. At 3.7 miles the trail makes a sharp left turn. Before crossing the Farmington Canal, notice that it is not as wide here as it was in Avon. This is because the aqueduct was only built for one barge at a time to pass, to cut down on construction costs. The blue house in front of you was the location of the basin for south bound travel. Barges would have to wait their turn. There is also a basin on the east side next to route 10 for north bound barges. Follow the yellow trail back to your car at 3.8 miles.

The Canal Era did not last long, but it was instrumental in the formation of Unionville as the industrial center of town. For more information: <http://hdl.handle.net/11134/660002:2671>

A group hike would find better parking for over 12 cars where the trail crosses Tillotson Road in Avon, just south of the junction with Old Farms Road.