

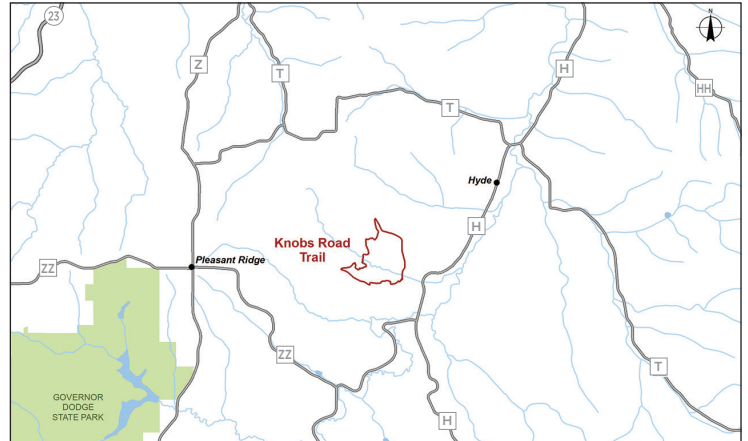


THE DRIFTLESS TRAIL: KNOBS ROAD SEGMENT

LOCATION & PARKING

LOCATION: This trail is 9 miles southeast of Spring Green and 5 miles north of Ridgeway. **Directions:** From Highway 23, one mile south of the Wisconsin River turn left onto County T. Travel 4.4 miles, turn right onto Knobs Road, and go 1.8 miles to the trailhead. From County H, 3.5 miles north of Ridgeway or 9.5 miles south Highway 14, turn west on Knobs Road and go 1.4 miles to the trailhead.

PARKING: Park on the shoulder of the road, well off the pavement and at the crest of the hill. Cars travel fast on Knobs Road so be extra safe when parking, turning around, and hiking. Avoid using driveways.



THE HIKE

DIFFICULTY: **MODERATE**

LENGTH: **3.9 MILES ROUND-TRIP**

This trail winds 2.7 miles through a property that produces Butler Grassfed Beef. It offers options of out-and-back turn around on the ridge or a loop that includes 1.2 miles of walking lightly traveled Knobs Road. It is moderately hilly, with a flat mile-long ridge in the middle. **Please follow SIGNED trails only.**

POINTS OF INTEREST:

1. Apple orchard: While this orchard is not actively maintained, many of the trees produce large quantities of fruit. These apple varieties are old, diverse and not generally seen in the supermarket.

2. Planted prairie: This field of Indian grass, bluestem, and prairie forbes includes an area of wet ground where the trail dips. This is one of many seeps on the property where groundwater hits a layer of rock close to the surface and flows downslope. Note the wet swale in the lower part of this field.

3. Pasture and stream: A herd of approximately 150 cattle are rotationally grazed here periodically or so during the growing season. **When cattle are present, the gates will be closed and you must cross the fence using the ladder stiles. It is fine to walk near the animals, but do not touch or scare them.**

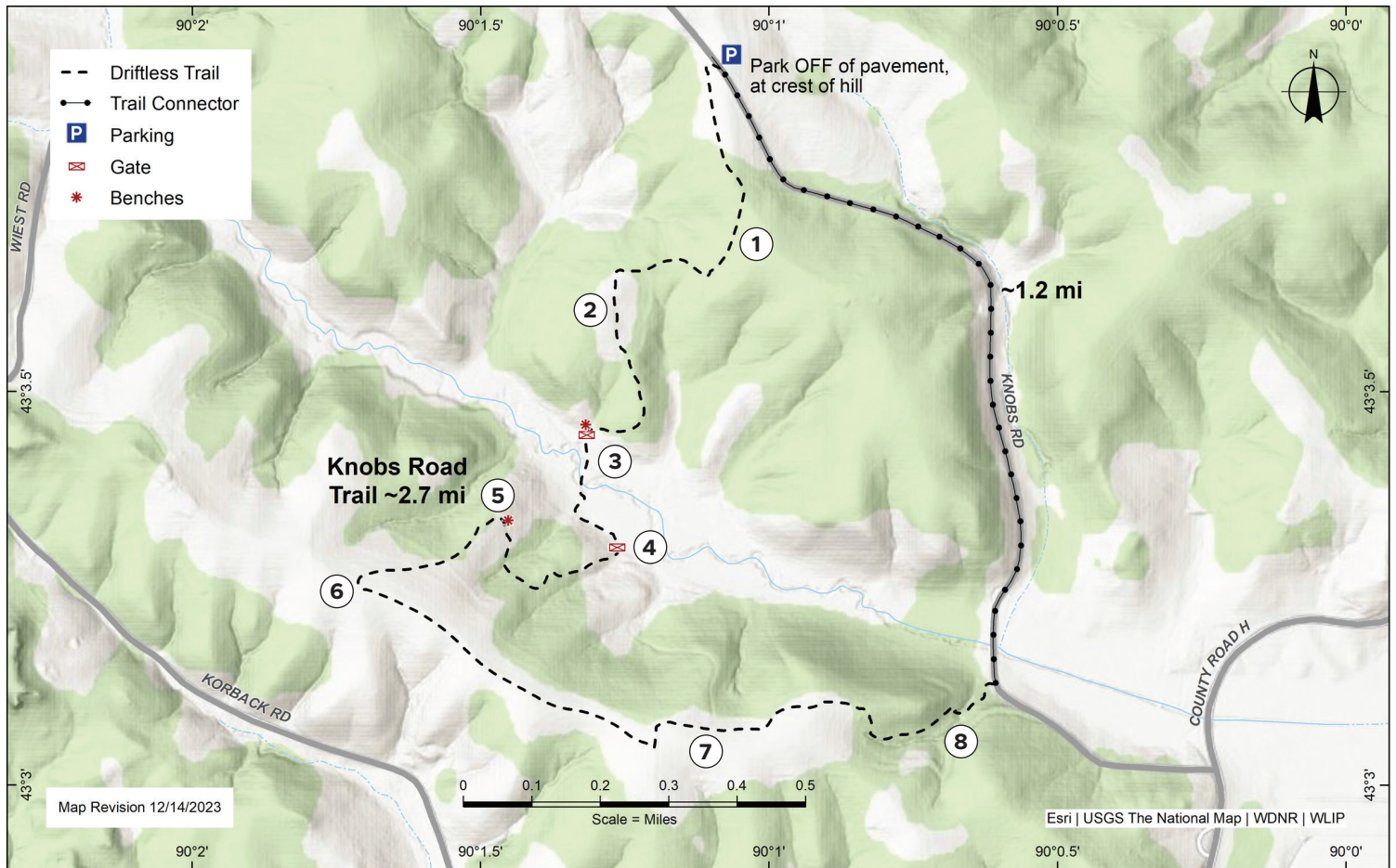
The spring-fed stream flows into Mill Creek, which runs from Governor Dodge State Park north to the Wisconsin River at Tower Hill State Park. The Mill Creek watershed is noted as a Legacy Place in the *2006 Wisconsin Land Legacy Report*. These are places believed to be most important to meet the state's conservation and recreation needs over the next 50 years.

4. Spring: A large spring with abundant watercress is near the gate on the south side of the pasture. Springs occur when water pressure in the underlying aquifer causes a natural flow of groundwater through cracks and tunnels onto the earth's surface. Water emerges from springs throughout the Driftless Area at a steady 48-50° F year-round, making it ideal for brook and brown trout. Also note the wet area at the base of the hill all along the south side of the pasture. Cold groundwater seeps down this hillside, and you will find pockets of plants here that are typically found further north.

5. Overlook with benches: While much of this wooded slope is covered with honeysuckle, a common invasive shrub once planted as wildlife habitat, this knoll remains open with a nice view of the valley. A few large oaks in the mostly walnut woods here remind us this area was once oak savanna. Take a seat and enjoy a rest!

6. CRP and hayfield turn-around point for out-and-back hike: Much of this mile-long ridge provides hay for cattle. The lower part of the slope is a CRP (Conservation Reserve Program) field. The federal government (USDA) gives the landowner annual rental payments for 10-15 years in exchange for removing environmentally sensitive land from agricultural production and planting species that improve water quality, benefit wildlife, and prevent soil erosion. The top half of the ridge is planted with perennial crops that provide hay and improve the soil.

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7. Big bluestem planting: The eastern third of the ridge is planted with big bluestem and Indian grass. The straw they produce is harvested in November and used for bedding for the cows. In very dry years, the grass is harvested in summer and used for emergency hay, since native grasses have deep roots that make them more drought-resistant than non-native grasses.

8. Mixed oak forest: The south end of this trail runs through an oak-dominated woodland. You will find another very common sight on the forest floor here – garlic mustard. This highly invasive plant, which flowers in May, is a biennial that grows in dense stands and is difficult to eradicate once it spreads.

SPECIAL NOTES:

- There are no toilets or water available at this trail.
- Knobs Road has little traffic, but cars DO travel fast on this road so **walk on or near the shoulder**.
- This trail will be closed much of November for deer hunting. Check website for closure dates.
- Pets are welcome but MUST remain on a leash.
- **Wild parsnip** grows on stretches of this trail. See the Driftless Trail web page for important information. Avoid contact with this plant



**Enjoy your hike and leave no trace – the best way
to preserve this trail forever!**

Learn more and donate at driftlessconservancy.org/driftless-trail

Our thanks to those who have made this trail possible: the landowner, John C. Bock Foundation, Alliant Energy Foundation, James E. Dutton Foundation, WisCorps program, Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin, and many individual volunteers and donors.