



TRAIL AT-A-GLANCE:

OLMSTEAD LOOP TRAIL



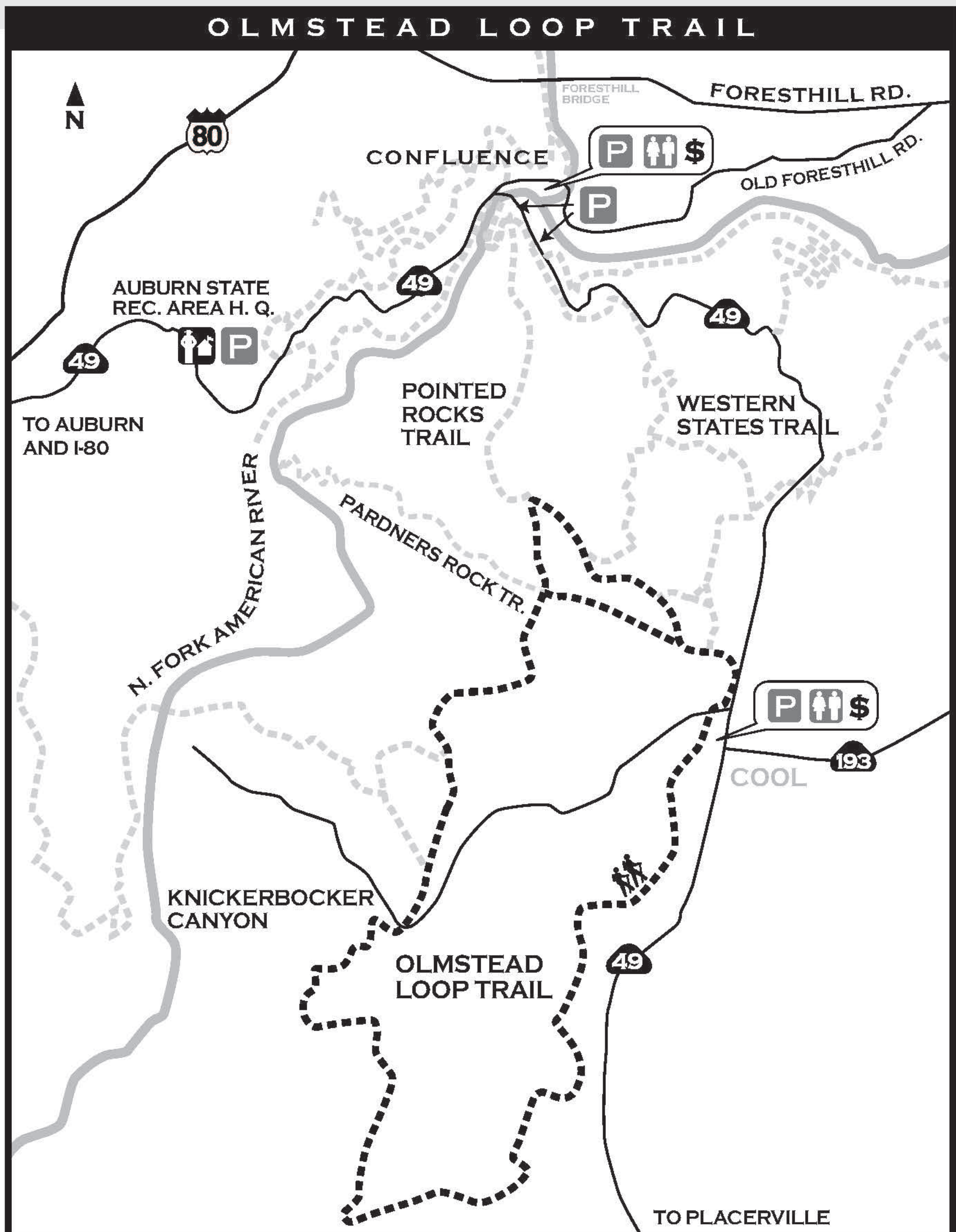
DISTANCE: 8.6 miles; 4 hours (hiking), but a variety of shorter trail options and cutoffs are also possible



DIFFICULTY: Easy to moderate



ELEVATION CHANGE: +/- 370'



Olmstead Loop Trail

TRAIL SNAPSHOT

This beautiful loop trail, which parallels Hwy. 49 on one side and the American River Canyon on the other, passes through open, rolling hills of oaks, wildflowers and abandoned homesteads and orchards. It also includes steep canyon descents and climbs as it crosses Knickerbocker and Salt Creeks. Side trails on the canyon side offer panoramic views of the North Fork American River and of the Auburn dam construction site. Trail markers have been posted at most trail intersections.

Tandem riders race in the annual Cool Mountain Bike Race.



Trailhead Parking

(N38-53.335; W121-01.036)

Trailhead and parking are behind the fire station in Cool. Take Hwy. 49 south to Cool and turn right at St. Florian Court just before the fire station and blinking red light. This is also the Cool staging area for equestrians. Trailheads are on south and north ends of the parking area.

OLMSTEAD LOOP TRAIL

The Olmstead Loop Trail is especially popular for hikers, bikers and equestrians in the springtime when wildflowers are in bloom. Ponds and vernal pools are visible, and numerous species of birds can be seen. Bobcats, coyote and bear are occasionally glimpsed. The Cool Mountain Bike Race, usually held in March, uses this trail and is well known for its large amounts of flying mud.

Proceeding around the loop in a clockwise direction, most of the first section of the trail is fairly flat and meanders through a typical foothill oak woodland ecosystem. Note: bikes race in a counter-clockwise direction. It passes through sprawling hills, providing great views of the snow-capped Sierras in the distance. At about 3½ miles, the trail starts winding down through a pine forest to Knickerbocker Creek. At the creek crossing, you can enjoy the natural setting with its pools and rushing water before heading uphill again. The more ad-

venturous may want to scramble down a faint side trail to see Knickerbocker Creek waterfalls and pools from the rim of Knickerbocker Canyon.

Continuing on the Olmstead Loop, the trail is steeper beyond Knickerbocker Creek, but after another half mile you will be at the top of a hill that affords a grand view. The trail soon crosses a wide, paved road built to provide access to the top of the foundation for the Auburn Dam. For a shortcut, take this road to the right for 1¾ miles to get back to the Cool fire station (for about a 7 mile loop). Indian grinding rocks are visible just off the paved road in the trees about ¼ mile from Cool.

The Olmstead Loop crosses the paved road and continues on for about another 4 miles. It intersects the Auburn to Cool Trail (labeled Coffey Dam Trail on the markers) twice, once before climbing up a rather steep hill and again shortly before crossing the headwaters of Salt Creek, which is at the bottom of an even steeper descent. A gradual climb leads to an intersection near an old homestead. (Note: The very obscure Pardners Rock Trail starts here, passing through the meadow before dropping steeply down to the river.) The terrain continuing on the Olmstead Loop Trail flattens out, and then another steady climb takes you to the top of a shady knoll. Here, the trail meets the Pointed Rocks Trail (*see page 59*), which descends left to the Confluence Area.

The Olmstead Loop descends gradually after this, winding to the right in a big U-turn past outcroppings of pointed rocks. It passes two side trails that lead to the Western States Trail (labeled Wendell T. Robie Trail on the markers), which both take off to the left. Tevis Cup riders and 100 mile endurance runners use the WST for their annual Squaw Valley to Auburn races.

The trail then crosses another small knoll before returning along Hwy. 49 to the Cool fire station.

HISTORICAL SNAPSHOT:

Olmstead Loop Trail

The Olmstead Loop Trail was formerly known as the Knickerbocker Trail. It was named for the late Dan Olmstead in 1993. Olmstead was a local, avid mountain biker, hiker and bike shop owner. He dedicated himself to creating harmony between hikers, mountain bikers and equestrians, and to multi-use of trails in this area.



Equestrians and bikers enjoy the Knickerbocker Trail.

FATRAC: Folsom-Auburn Trail Riders Action Coalition

FATRAC is a biking organization that educates trail users about proper trail stewardship, including maintenance and trail-building techniques. www.fatrac.org



Bobcat tracks

