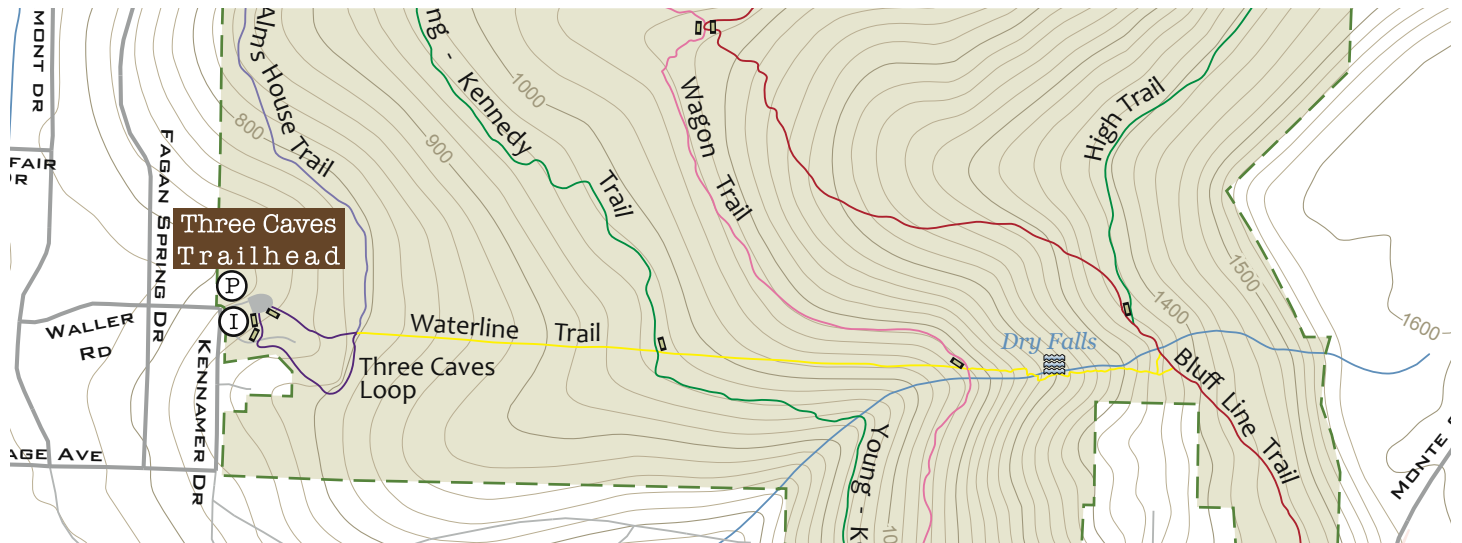


WATERLINE TRAIL TOUR

Monte Sano Nature Preserve



TOUR ROUTE

Three Caves Loop » Waterline Trail » Back to Three Caves Trailhead
(approximately 1.78 miles)

Begin from Three Caves Trailhead (901 Kennamer Drive SE, Huntsville, AL 35801). Take Three Caves Loop to Waterline Trail. Hike up Waterline Trail (you'll be heading east). When you reach Bluff Line Trail, turn around and head back the way you came. Luckily, you'll be heading downhill on the hike back!

Hike Notes: This route is a fairly short total distance but can be physically challenging due to the change in elevation (approximately 650 ft). The upper portions of the trail (beyond Wagon Trail) become significantly rocky and difficult. However, you can choose to avoid this challenging section and simply turn around when you reach the intersection at Wagon Trail.

Always take a trail map!

Monte Sano Nature Preserve trail map available at landtrustna.org/monte-sano-preserve

Trail Tour provided by
David Young, Land Trust Hike Leader



STORIES OF THE OLD WATERLINE TRAIL

The old water line served as a backup system for residents of the south part of Monte Sano Mountain when the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) spring ran dry. The CCC spring was the primary source of water when it was available here. When this spring was dry, water was pumped up the mountain 1184 feet. In order to move the water up the mountain, one, and then two pumps were necessary. Accessing the city water was expensive, and efforts were taken to minimize the use of this source.

The CCC laid the water line up the mountain, and the line was not the best design. The lines had to be drained each winter. As you can tell by looking, the pipe was simply laid on the ground and covered with rocks and dirt. It was prone to freezing in the winter months and was not used much during the winter season. Each spring, crews would hike up the pipeline and check for leaks, carrying long sections of 2 inch pipe to repair any leaks they found.

The water source was Fagan Spring, and water was moved to the pump house near Three Caves Quarry by a Deming Tri-plex pump. A three piston pump with a 20 horse power motor was used to move the water in a single stage up the mountain. Each piston was 3 inches in diameter and had a six inch stroke. The pump ran at a much higher rate than the 2 inch waterline was rated for, and this resulted in many system failures, including failure of the pipe and the pump.

The pump most often failed at the packing around the pistons, so a backup pump was kept by the pump house. The pump house was only big enough for a single pump, so the backup pump was stored outside the building. Some of the worst times of trouble occurred during dry winters, when the water line from the city froze, causing the pipes to burst, most often at night. The company volunteers and the paid maintenance person would have to hike down the water line trail in the cold conditions, find and fix the leak. The water had to be kept flowing to minimize this type of problem.

Power failures also contributed to water supply problems. A failure from electrical storms, etc. could stop the pumps at either Fagan Spring or near Three Caves Quarry. Water system managers would contact a city representative, who would see to it that the electricity was restored as soon as possible. Once - so a story goes - the pump was disassembled by some teenagers, and sold for parts to a local junkyard.

To use the pump, one resident would stop by the pump house on the way to work in the morning to turn on the system. Then, Marvin Tippet, Dr. Burritt's caretaker, would watch the system, and when the water tank on top of the mountain began to overflow, he would drive down the mountain and shut the pump down. A major improvement was added in the early 1950's with a telephone line and remote control which allowed Marvin Tippet to turn the pump on and off by remote control. This was the last system improvement added before the mountain obtained a city water system.

By 1955, there were over 300 houses on the mountain, and Huntsville proposed annexing the area. A condition of the annexation was the addition of city water and a new system. The old water line was abandoned.