

The Norwalk River Park and Fields is a parcel comprised largely of open space, with two smaller athletic fields and pavilion located immediately off the south side of Old Mill Road. For many Wilton residents, these athletic fields are known as the Lion's Club Fields, reminiscent of the period when the Lion's Club leased the fields from Gilbert and Bennett. The property as a whole is long and narrow in shape, straddling the Norwalk River for roughly 5,000 linear feet.

The portion of the site north of Old Mill Road, at one time, supported two mills. The northern mill, up at the town boundary was the site of the first Gilbert and Bennett wire mill. The second mill was located closer to Old Mill Road and was used for various milling operations over its lifetime. What was left of these mills was largely eliminated during the flood of 1955.

Remaining evidence includes a sluiceway some 900 feet north of Old Mill Road, the abutments of South Church Street Bridge and bricks strewn throughout the site.

Since its time as a host to mills and industry, the site has revegetated and topographic alterations have softened. The southern two thirds of the entire property most notably functions as a floodplain for the Norwalk River. The flat topography adjacent to the river is critical for storing floodwaters and reducing their velocity before the waters slowly recede back to the river. Maple trees, some larger sized black birch trees, sycamores, and stands of black locust and ash dominate these floodplain areas.

The shrub layer south of the athletic fields is dominated by wetland species, with robust skunk cabbage, sensitive fern and cinnamon fern populations covering the forest floor. North of Old Mill Road, a sparse shrub layer gives way to a matrix of dense Japanese barberry interspersed with grassy clearings.

In the northern third of the property, the topography changes dramatically. The gentle, nearly flat riverside topography gives way to a stunning steep sided ravine. Here, towering hemlocks are strong canopy members intermixed with various deciduous trees. The presence of hemlock populations is particular to the Georgetown section of Wilton, and is not seen as vividly in other parts of town.

There are no trails in the ravine; hence the only way to visit this area is to walk up the river during periods of low flow. The high slopes of this area provide beauty as well as quiet where the sounds of Route 7 are muted out.

In addition to hiking, picnicking and ball games, the Norwalk Park and Fields is a prime fishing site



Directions: From Wilton Center take Rte. 7 north.
Right on Old Mill Road. Entrance is 500 feet on right.

Acreage: + 33

Parking: South side of Old Mill Road across from the Pavillion.

Access: Old Mill Road

Trails: A short trail opposite the recreation area entrance, parallels the Norwalk River.

Ownership: Town of Wilton

