Clarion River Access Sites—Upper Section

River miles are used to identify the locations of various sites along the river. River mile 0 is at the confluence of the Clarion River and the Allegheny River. “River Left” and “River Right” are used to indicate which side of the river a site is on. Orient yourself looking downstream to determine left and right. River miles for the East and West Branches continue from the mileage on the main stem with “E” added for the East Branch and “W” added for the West Branch.

Launch Permits: PFBC (PA Fish & Boat Commission) and DCNR (PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources) launches require local registration (other states accepted) or a launch permit from a state park office or PFBC. Corps (US Army Corps of Engineers), ANF (Allegheny National Forest) and PGC (Pennsylvania Game Commission) do not require launch permits.

115 E River Right Instanter Boat Launch Lat 41 36 21 Lon -78 33 34 Located in Elk State Park on the north end of the East Branch Lake, this launch provides access for motorboats and paddlers. Facilities include ample parking, picnic area, and restrooms.

111 E River Right East Branch Boat Launch Corps Lat 41 33 49 Lon -78 35 37 Located on Corps of Engineers land near the East Branch Dam, this launch provides access for motorboats and paddlers. Facilities include phone and restrooms. Parking can be congested on summer weekends. Launch fee waived during dam construction.

107 E River Left Benldo State Park Take-out DCNR Lat 41 31 42 Lon -78 37 46 This hand-carry launch is located at Benldo State Park. Facilities include piers, swimming pool, drinking water, restrooms and public phone. This is the last launch on the East Branch because public use is not permitted where the river flows through the mill at Johnsonburg.

110 W River Right Wilcox Canoe Launch Jones Township Lat 41 34 45 Lon -78 41 21 This hand-carry launch is located next to the township garage on old Kane Road. This site provides simple parking, but be careful not to block access to the garage or equipment. Adequate river flow for paddling is present in the spring and after a heavy rainfall.

94 River Right Private Lat 41 25 16 Lon -78 44 02 There is no public access in Ridgway. Two private outfitters, located where the Clarion River crosses PA 948, provide rentals and livery service. Contact them about parking and access to the river (see reverse for contact information).

85 River Left Portland Mills Canoe Launch PGC Lat 41 22 07 Lon -78 49 42 Located on SGL 44 across the river from the town of Portland Mills. There is parking for 8-10 cars. This site can be very congested on spring and summer weekends.

80 River Left Arroyo Canoe Launch PGC Lat 41 23 22 Lon -78 52 52 Located on SGL 44 across the river from the town of Arroyo, this hand-carry launch can accommodate 10-15 cars. There is parking for 10-12 cars.

76 River Right Irwin Run Canoe Launch ANF Lat 41 24 00 Lon -78 54 52 Located on SGL 28 in the town of Irwin Run where Spring Creek empties into the Clarion River. There is parking for 10-12 cars.

74 River Right Halton Canoe Launch PGC Lat 41 24 04 Lon -78 55 57 This hand-carry launch is located on SGL 28 in the town of Halton where Spring Creek empties into the Clarion River. There is parking for 10-12 cars.

Caution Information
Motorboat traffic can be heavy on the East Branch Lake during the summer months. The East and West Branches of the Clarion River are more susceptible to stream-wide strainers and have limited access. The East Branch has few rapids. On the main stem of the Clarion River, there are four class I to I+ rapids that can be navigated by scouting ahead. Be prepared.

- River mile 108.7E: Low bridge clearance at Glen Hazel Road
- River mile 104.5E: Stream-side low hanging cable
- River mile 102.5 - 103E (confluence) RIVER CLOSED to public use where it flows through the Domtar Mill in Johnsonburg. No portage available. Paddlers should take out at Benldo State Park due to no public access on the East Branch in Johnsonburg.
- River mile 107.9W: Stream-side low hanging cable
- River mile 98.6: Railroad tie-on bridge abutments with possible STRAINERS caused by trees wrapped around the piers.
Water trails are recreational waterways on a lake, river, or ocean between specific points, containing access points and day-use and/or camping sites for the boating public. Water trails emphasize low-impact use and promote stewardship of the resources. Explore this unique Pennsylvania water trail.

Boat rentals, guides, and liveries

For your safety and enjoyment:

- Always wear a life jacket
- Obtain proper instruction in boating skills
- Know fishing and boating regulations
- Be prepared for changing conditions
- Be alert for river hazards
- Carry proper equipment

Pennsylvania Boat Rentals, Guides, and Liveries

**ALONG THE WAY**

*River Miles are used to identify the locations of various sites along the river. River Mile 0 is at the confluence of the Clarion River and the Allegheny River. Landmarks identify the river mile from a point on the river bank. The mile is measured from the mouth of the river between the East Branch Clarion River and the Allegheny River.*

**WEST BRANCH CLARION RIVER**

Mile 116 E to 111 E

Elk State Park: Surrounding East Branch Lake, a popular recreation area for fishing, hunting, and boating. For more information: www.elkstatepark.com

Mile 110.6 E to 109.8 E

Branch Hill: A short distance downstream from the Weirton Dam. This section is designated as a trout nursery. Paddlers are advised to take-out at Willow Run State Park because there is no public access to the East Branch in this area.

Mile 88 E to 86 E

Surrounding East Branch Lake and East Branch Clarion River. For more information: www.pgc.state.pa.us

Mile 60 E to 58 E

Main Recreation Site: Fishing, boating, picnicking, and a swimming pool. For more information: www.clarionriver.org

Mile 52 E

Donner Mill at Johnstown: WARNING: Public use is not permitted where the river flows through the valley. There is a low head dam in this section that presents a serious safety hazard to paddlers. The Corps of Engineers prohibits boating in this area.

Mile 11 E to 11 E

Elk State Park: Surrounding East Branch Lake, a popular recreation area for fishing, hunting, and boating. For more information: www.elkstatepark.com

Mile 6 E to 5 E

Branch Hill: A short distance downstream from the Weirton Dam. This section is designated as a trout nursery. Paddlers are advised to take-out at Willow Run State Park because there is no public access to the East Branch in this area.

**THE CLARION RIVER**

The Clarion River meanders through more than 115 miles of narrow serpentine valleys and hardwood forests. Located in the Pennsylvania Wilds in the northeastern corner of the state, it flows through Clarion County, Venango County, Jefferson County, and the Allegheny River in Clarion County. The Clarion River’s Water Trail stretches divided into Pennclaw to Iselin Run (Irwin Run), the Middle (Irwin Run to Mill Creek), and the Lower (Mill Creek to Clarion). The river is designated as wild & scenic.

Over the last two hundred years of European settlement, the history of the Clarion River has been a compelling story of resource exploitation, degradation, resilience, and recovery. The lumber industry was the focal point of the Clarion River during the latter part of the 19th century and into the 20th century. Paddling the Clarion River was not the most pleasant experience, and sometimes as far as New Orleans. At the same time, other industries, such as coal mining, leather tanning, and hunting, flourished.

Today, the Clarion River is a popular paddling and fishing destination. Wildlife, cranberry bogs, and riparian corridors provide a picturesque backdrop for outdoor recreation. Outstanding features include a nationally recognized old growth white pine and hemlock forest, and a federally designated stretch of Wild & Scenic River.

Adjacent public lands provide abundant opportunities for camping, hiking, bicycling, wildlife watching, picnicking or just enjoyment. The Clarion River is now recognized as a true national treasure with a rich industrial history and an outstanding destination for outdoor recreation. Once declared the most polluted river in the state, the river’s water quality has experienced a tremendous improvement.

**BOAT RENTALS, GUIDES AND LIVERIES**

**Fishing**

Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission regulations apply.

**Fishing**

- Branch Hill Recreation Area: Contains waterways, smallmouth bass, largemouth bass, and trout. Bass is popular.

- White Clarks Fork: Stiffled with lures. Delayed Harvest Artificial lures only within 1.5 miles downstream. 1/4 miles. Bass & trout provide the best fishing into such. Note: there is a great deal of water over much further than it comes on land. Many fishermen enjoy the river and soap dish do not display the same amount of courtesy that you would expect in return. A friendly word or quiet greeting is always welcome.

- East Branch Clarion River and East Fork Creek: Stiffled with lures. Delayed Harvest Good fishing.

- Clarion River between Allegheny and Ridgway: This section is open year round for smallmouth bass and brook Trout.

- Clarion River: Excellent smallmouth bass fishing.

**Boating**

There are limited opportunities to camp along the upper stretch of the Clarion River. The Corps of Engineers operates a full-time camp at the Weirton Dam campground at the East Branch Dam Recreation Area (closed until mid-June). Campsites are available on a first-come, first-served basis. There are no group campers accommodations on this stretch.

**Float Trips**

There are no group campers accommodations on this stretch. There are many private campgrounds along this stretch. One should check campgrounds on that stretch before camping along this stretch.

**Skinny**

- Elk County Historical Society: From Main Street (PA 465) west of the Clarion River valley. Public phones are marked on the map.

- Pennsylvania Great Outdoors Visitors Bureau: From Main Street (PA 465) west of the Clarion River valley. Public phones are marked on the map.

- Slatebank and Clarion River Bank: Excellent smallmouth bass fishing.

- Clarion River: Excellent smallmouth bass fishing.

**Emergency**

- Emergency: 911

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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