



# Conewango Creek Water Trail

## Map & Guide

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.



For your safety and enjoyment:

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



### WILDLIFE ON THE CREEK

The rural nature of the Conewango Creek Valley creates a great habitat for wildlife. As you paddle downstream, you will probably see many species of birds and animals, as well as a large array of water creatures. Bald Eagles have made a tremendous comeback on the Conewango with several nest sites being identified. On most trips, you can expect to see eagles, ospreys, blue herons, little green herons, kingfishers, pileated woodpeckers, and many species of ducks. Akeley Swamp, which is easily accessible from the creek, has an easy walking/hiking trail that runs the length of the swamp. You will encounter many species of salamanders, snakes, frogs, and turtles. Watch for nesting turtles in the early summer. They can often be seen along the walking trail digging a nesting site. Otters have been reintroduced to the Conewango, and now there is a breeding population. They hunt fish and frogs and are often seen on the flat water section. Beavers are plentiful, and you will see many signs of their handy work on the banks of the creek. The shy muskrat can also be seen cruising along with mouthfuls of grass and green leaves. If you are quiet and watchful, you may also spot deer, black bears, and turkeys. These wild animals are very shy, so, please try to keep their presence a mystery. For all of our creatures, we say *photo shooting only* is encouraged for sharing! We ask you to please respect not only the creatures' privacy but also that of our local residents.



### GEOLOGY OF THE CREEK

The valley of the Conewango Creek was formed during the last ice age. In pre-glacial time, the drainage pattern for the region was in a northerly direction toward the basin of present-day Lake Erie. Water then flowed to the Atlantic Ocean through the St. Lawrence River. The valley of the ancient Allegheny River became filled with glacial deposits as deep as 500 feet with an additional 100 feet of silt deposited by a lake formed by melting ice. During the Wisconsin glacial period the northward drainage was blocked and forced in a southerly direction. The present-day Conewango Creek meanders across these deposits in a broad valley lying in Chautauqua and Cattaraugus Counties of New York State. As the creek flows southward through this valley, the underlying sediment along its banks is exposed. When eroded, the silt gives the Conewango its turbid appearance. Entering Pennsylvania, the valley narrows, being restricted by moraines and kame terraces left by the retreating ice. Wetlands and croplands are replaced by glacial deposits. Just north of the village of Russell, the creek cuts through these deposits where the gradient suddenly drops resulting in rapids, shallower water, and a marked change from mud bottom to a gravel creek bed. From this point, to its mouth in Warren, the valley has a few narrow flood plains as it flows between glacial moraines and hills of Devonian bedrock.

### PADDLEFISH

Watch for paddlefish! The Pa Fish & Boat Commission and NY DEC began restocking these fish into the waters of the Allegheny and Ohio rivers in 1991. Once native to Lake Erie and most river systems in our area their populations declined greatly due to over harvesting, sedimentation, and river modification. Improvements in water quality and of lock and dam systems have given this fish a chance to survive in waters where it originally swam. The last paddlefish sighted in Pa waters was in 1919. Paddlefish commonly reach 5 feet or more in length and 60 to 100 pounds in weight. The largest on record was 198 pounds! Paddlefish take many years before they are able to spawn. A female may take 9 to 10 years, when they are about 42 inches long, and males 7 years old and 40 inches long are able to spawn. Paddlefish need free flowing rivers that have shallow pools with sandy, rocky bottoms for their spawning. You might see one of these wonderful fish as it basks on the surface or as it swims along filtering plankton, its main food source. The released fish are tagged and monitored. If you should spot a paddlefish, please just take a picture for your 'catch' and contact the Fish and Boat Commission with its location and size.



Paddlefish

### PENNSYLVANIA BOATING REGULATIONS

- One wearable, Coast Guard-approved personal flotation device (PFD or life jacket) in serviceable condition and of the appropriate size is required for each person in the boat. If the boat is 16 feet or longer, one throwable device (seat cushion or ring buoy) is required. Canoes and kayaks, regardless of length, are not required to carry a throwable device.
- Life jackets must be worn by children 12 years and younger on all boats 20 feet or less in length while under way, and on all canoes and kayaks. Others are strongly encouraged to wear a PFD at all times on the water.
- All boats must display an anchor light (a white light visible 360 degrees) when at anchor between sunset and sunrise. Boats can use lantern or clip-on battery-powered unit to meet this requirement.
- All powered boats must show running lights between sunset and sunrise. Between sunset and sunrise, unpowered boats must carry white light (visible 360 degrees), installed or portable, ready to be displayed in time to avoid collision.
- All motorboats are required to carry a sound-producing mechanical device audible for a half-mile. Athletic whistles meet this requirement.
- All motor boats must be registered, regardless of where they are launched.
- Unpowered boats (canoes, kayaks, rowboats, rafts) using Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission access areas must be either registered OR display a valid launch permit. Launch permits can be purchased on-line at [www.fish.state.pa.us](http://www.fish.state.pa.us).
- Operating watercraft, including canoes, kayaks, and rafts, under the influence of alcohol or drugs is illegal. The law is strongly enforced for user safety. For further information on boating regulations, contact the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission at [www.fish.state.pa.us](http://www.fish.state.pa.us).



### PADDLING SAFETY TIPS

- **Wear your life jacket.** Some 80 percent of all recreational boating fatalities happen to people who are not wearing a life jacket.
- **Expect to get wet.** Even the best paddlers sometimes capsize or swamp their boats. Bring extra clothing in a waterproof bag.
- **Be prepared to swim.** If the water looks too hazardous to swim in, don't go paddling.
- **If you capsize,** hold onto your boat, unless it presents a life-threatening situation. If floating in current, position yourself on the upstream side of the capsized boat.
- **Scout ahead whenever possible.** Know the river. Avoid surprises.
- **Be prepared for the weather.** Get the forecast before you go. Sudden winds and rain are common and can turn a pleasant trip into a risky, unpleasant venture.
- **Wear wading shoes** or tennis shoes with wool, polypropylene, pile or neoprene soles.
- **Never take your boat over a low-head dam.**
- **Portage** (carry) your boat around any section of water about which you feel uncertain.
- **Never boat alone.** Boating safety increases with numbers.
- **Keep painter lines** (ropes tied to the bow) and any other ropes coiled and secured.
- **Never tie a rope to yourself** or to another paddler, especially a child.
- **Kneel to increase your stability** before entering rougher water, like a rapid.
- **If you collide with an obstruction, lean toward it.** This will usually prevent you capsizing or flooding the boat.
- **File a float plan** with a reliable person, indicating where you are going and when you will return. Remember to contact the person when you have returned safely.



### STEWARDSHIP

Help care for the land, water and cultural resources along the River by respecting wildlife, nature and other recreationists. It is important to wash footwear, boats and vehicles to minimize the spread of invasive species from one place to another. "Leave No Trace," a national outdoor ethics program, provides some guidelines to minimize your impact. For more information, visit [www.lnt.org](http://www.lnt.org). **Leave no trace for camping or day use:**

1. Plan and prepare
2. Travel and camp on durable surfaces
3. Dispose of waste properly
4. Leave what you find
5. Minimize campfire
6. Respect wildlife
7. Be considerate of other visitors



## PADDLING THE CONEWANGO

Conewango is an Iroquois name meaning 'below the riffles.' The Conewango Creek was the waterway trail leading to the 'Forbidden Path' of the Seneca Nation, so called because it was guarded so carefully. The Native Americans were hostile to anyone who dared enter the path because it was a direct line to the 'Land of Lakes', their special domain. In 1749 a French force under the leadership of Celoron de Blainville paddled down the Conewango in exploration and claimed the land for France. On the shore of Lake Erie, at the mouth of Chautauqua Creek in present-day Westfield, New York, the expedition cut a road over the French Portage Road, and carried their boats and equipment overland to Chautauqua Lake. They then followed the Chadakoin River and Conewango Creek to the Allegheny River, reaching it on July 29, 1749. As they progressed, the expedition sought to strengthen France's claim to the territory by marking it at the mouths of several principal tributaries. At each point, a tin or copper plate bearing the French royal arms was nailed to a tree. Below, an inscribed leaden plate was buried, declaring the claims of France. The first plate was buried at the mouth of the Conewango in Warren. In the 1800's the creek became a logging highway as vast log rafts were lashed together and floated downstream to Pittsburg for sale. Today the Conewango is still rural and wild, a haven for wildlife and for those who wish to paddle back in time.

### ALONG THE WAY

**Clam Island:** Located in New York near the state line, this island is a camping spot with an access dock. The island's name derives from the obvious evidence of clam shells and was historically used by the Seneca Indians. There is a lean-to for shelter, a fire pit, picnic tables and a privy. New York State limits camping to overnight stays only.



**State Line Bridge:** The first bridge to cross the Conewango Creek was built on this site before 1827. Revolutionary War veteran John Owen operated a ferry at the site until the age of 90. Mr. Benjamin Covell then built the bridge. The bridge was destroyed in 1920 by thick ice. It was replaced by a swinging bridge which was washed out by ice and high water in 1926 and never replaced.

**Forbidden Path:** This Indian trail was so named because the Seneca Indian Tribe guarded it so fiercely. It eventually became part of a stage road connecting New York City, Cleveland, and Chicago. It crossed the Conewango near where the Old State Rd. intersects with US Rt. 62.

**Akeley Swamp:** Akeley Swamp consists of 365 acres of wetlands with three ponds interspersed with open fields and oak and hickory forest. Two abandoned railroad grades are maintained as good walking trails. The waters provide habitat for the Spiny Softshell Turtle. 147 species of birds have been recorded in Akeley wetlands since 1994. Shorebirds and waterfowl use the wetland as a migration stop-over and for breeding. About 12 pairs of Great Blue Heron nest in a heron rookery on the site. The main swamp serves as an important nursery for Northern Pike.

**Storehouse Run:** Site of early Native American villages and the location where George Washington's troops stored supplies while they traveled overland to negotiate with Chief Complanter of the Seneca nation.

**Conewango Kayak & Canoe:** The only Canoe and Kayak Livery on the Conewango. Offers guided floats and camping facilities. Contact: [www.paddledconewango.com](http://www.paddledconewango.com)

**Fox Mart:** Country General Store including grocery and camping items, pizza, subs, soft drinks, souvenirs, and more.

**Cable Hollow Golf Course:** 18 hole par 72 public golf course located to the East on Rt. 957.

**J N D'S Diner:** Family Restaurant (Home Town Cooking) Located on Route 62 close to Old Russell Road (Akeley)

**Tail Tales Sporting Goods:** Largest Sporting Good store in area. Complete line of camping, hunting, and fishing supplies.

**Ruff Acres:** A quaint Bed and Breakfast located in an Antique shop. They also offer tea parties. There is a place to view the history of the trolley that once ran through Russell.

**Wendy's Café:** Family Restaurant located at Main & State Sts. (Home Town Cooking.)

**Pizza Pros:** Specialty Pizzas, Stromboli, Chicken Wings, Finger Foods, Subs, Wraps, Fresh Baked Bread Bowl Salads and Ice Cream.

**Bridge at Russell:** Site of the original covered bridges built in 1827, 1840, & 1853. The 1853 bridge was razed in 1937 due to flood damage and replaced by the present steel bridge.

**Stream-Gaging Station:** Stream flow can change rapidly creating potential unsafe conditions. Check available resources such as weather, precipitation, USGS gauges, and local outfitters to plan accordingly. Look here for current stream flow information. <http://waterdata.usgs.gov/nwis/juv703015000>

**Joseph Akeley House:** The first frame house east of the Conewango constructed with double board siding, a new kind of building technique at the time. People scoffed that it would never last. Today it stands on the east corner of Priest Hollow Rd. & Cider Mill Hill Rd.

**Railroad Trestle:** The Dunkirk, Allegheny Valley, & Pittsburgh Railroad reached Pine Grove Township in the 1870's. Look for the concrete that is still there today.

**The Locusts:** The only house in Pine Grove Township to be on the National Register of Historic Places. Built between 1832 to 1835 by Guy Irvine and Rufus Weatherly, it is constructed of local hand-made bricks. The walls of the first floor are 24 inches thick. "The Locusts" received its name because of the grove of beautiful black locust trees surrounding the home.

**Hampton Inn & Suites:** Inn & Suites Located between Warren Commons and the Warren Mall.

**Bob Evans Farm Restaurant:** Family Restaurant including their new Carry Home Kitchen.

**Warren:** The City of Warren, county seat of Warren County, was founded in 1795. It is situated at the confluence of the Conewango Creek and the Allegheny River and is home to more than 10,000 residents. The original settlers came to log the lush forests and then to drill for oil. The revitalized downtown area has many of the original beautiful Victorian homes showing the former wealth of the area.

### TRAIL LINKS

The Conewango Creek Water Trail is 13.5 river miles in length and links to the north with the Marden E. Cobb Waterway Trail in New York State and to the Middle Allegheny River Water Trail to the south. This link establishes 174 river miles of designated accessible waterway passage.

The Marden E. Cobb Waterway Trail consists of 53 miles (86 Km) of wild and scenic flat waters on the Cassadaga and Conewango Creeks. There are parking areas and launch sites at many bridge crossings and Adirondack lean-to shelters have been constructed on a County-owned island in Conewango Creek and on several County-owned acres on the west bank of Cassadaga Creek. The remaining lands along the creeks are private and should be respected by those using the waterway. For more information contact: [www.co.chautauqua.ny.us/departments/dpf/parks](http://www.co.chautauqua.ny.us/departments/dpf/parks)

The Middle Allegheny River Water Trail is 107 river miles long starting at Kinzua Dam and ending at Emlenton, Pa just upstream of I-80. The Middle Allegheny is still considered a primitive river. Its size and constant release of water from Kinzua Dam make the river canoeable all year long. The normal summer flow of the Allegheny River along the length of the trail accommodates small, shallow-draft, powered and non-powered craft. This is a good novice and family canoe and kayak river. Contact the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for Kinzua Dam outflow information. Inexperienced and novice canoeists should avoid the Oil City Rapids by portaging around them. There are public lands available for camping. For more information contact: [www.fishandboat.com/watertrails](http://www.fishandboat.com/watertrails)

### PLACES OF INTEREST

**Allegheny Forest-** Over 1/2 million acres in size, the forest has four recreational areas with beaches, 16 campgrounds and picnic areas, six boat launches and hundreds of miles of trails. The Kinzua Dam, located within the Forest, is one of the largest dams east of the Mississippi.

**Jamestown Audubon-** The facility offers over five miles of trails on a 600 acre wetland preserve, and has a three-story nature center with interactive displays. Over 265 species of birds have been recorded at the site. A rescued bald eagle, Liberty, is housed onsite for visitors to learn about and observe. Located 1.5 mi. North of state line on Rt. 62, east on Riversiders Road.

**Chautauqua Institution-** This nationally renowned lake-side setting is a center for the arts, education, religion and recreation in Chautauqua County that was founded in 1874. The institute hosts a nine-week summer learning program each summer from June through late August. Day passes are available.

**Roger Tory Peterson Institute-** Named for the world famous naturalist, The Roger Tory Peterson Institute in Jamestown, NY is a national organization dedicated to instilling in children an appreciation and understanding of the natural world. The Institute's major emphasis is on wildlife interpretation through art, photography, and writing. The building is an architectural work of art in itself. Frequent exhibitions feature the work of Dr. Peterson and other wildlife artists. Trails wind through a variety of habitats including forest, field and marsh and provide guidance to the visitor on plant and animal identification using the Peterson Field Guides.

**Erie-** Located on Lake Erie, the City of Erie and its surroundings boast attractions of all kinds. Presque Isle State Park has 7 miles of pristine beaches and the Tom Ridge Environmental Center as well as the nearby Waldemere amusement park. There is a maritime museum, home of the US Brig Niagara, the Lake Erie Speedway, museums, theaters, a zoo, and miles of vineyards. The region grows grapes and produces the third largest amount of wine in the US. You can tour many of the vineyards.

**Buffalo-** Think of Buffalo and think Niagara Falls. The Buffalo Niagara region boasts a thriving visual arts community, diverse outdoor adventures, a vibrant theater and performing arts scene, numerous historic and architectural attractions, and unique shopping and dining options. Go to [www.visitbuffaloniagara.com](http://www.visitbuffaloniagara.com)

### RESPECT THE PRIVACY & RIGHTS OF LANDOWNERS

Although the access points highlighted in this guide are located on public property, most of the shoreline along the water trail is privately owned. Respect the privacy and rights of landowners by obtaining permission before entering any privately owned land. Avoid making noise and boisterous behavior. Remember that sound carries across water much louder than it carries across land. Many landowners enjoy the creek's peace and solitude from their decks and their living rooms. Share the same courtesy that you would want. A friendly wave or quiet greeting is always welcome!

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

