

Lehigh River Water Trail – Northern Section

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.**

A PENNSYLVANIA SCENIC RIVER

In 1982, a 32-mile section in the upper section Lehigh River corridor was designated a *Pennsylvania Scenic River*. This special designation is intended to help preserve the primitive qualities, as well as the natural and aesthetic values, of our rivers and adjacent land environment. Rivers so designated shall be free-flowing and capable of supporting both aquatic life, as well as water-based recreation.

THE LEHIGH RIVER WATER TRAIL

The Lehigh River Water Trail is 72-miles long, starting at White Haven and ending in the city of Easton at the Lehigh River's confluence with the Delaware River. There the traveler can continue down the Delaware towards Philadelphia and beyond to Delaware Bay.

Northern Section

This 41-mile segment of the Lehigh River Water Trail begins at White Haven at an access to the Lehigh Gorge State Park and ends at the Lehigh Gap at Blue Mountain at the Carbon-Lehigh-Northampton county line. Deep gorges and fast-moving water characterize this section of the Water Trail. Substantial canoeing or kayaking experience is required to maneuver most sections this reach of the river. It contains several access points and traverses 26 miles of the Lehigh Gorge State Park.

Southern Section

This 31-mile segment of the Water Trail begins at the Lehigh Gap at Blue Mountain at the Carbon-Lehigh-Northampton county line and ends at the confluence of the Lehigh River with the Delaware River in the city of Easton. This reach of the Water Trail widens out and tends to become more leisurely than the northern section. The land around the river is characterized by rolling hills and forested riparian corridors. The river contains numerous access points and passes through the urban centers of Allentown, Bethlehem, and Easton.

RESPECT THE PRIVACY & RIGHTS OF LANDOWNERS

Please respect the privacy and rights of landowners along the Juniata River Water Trail by obtaining permission before entering any privately owned land. Unless you are otherwise certain, assume the land is private property. In any case, avoid loud noises and boisterous behavior. Remember that sound carries across water much more clearly than on land. Some of the landowners enjoy the peace and solitude overlooking the river from their back yards. Use the same courtesy that you would want. A friendly wave or quiet greeting is always welcome.

Help care for the land, water and cultural resources along the Juniata 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 about "Leave No Trace" outdoor ethics, visit www.Lnt.org.

THE LEHIGH RIVER

Located in northeastern Pennsylvania, the Lehigh River originates in a series of glacial bogs and marshes in the area of Pocono Peak Lake in the Gouldsboro area about 15 miles southeast of Scranton. The elevation at the Lehigh River headwaters is approximately 2,200 feet above sea level, and drops nearly 1,000 feet during its 103-mile journey to its confluence with the Delaware River in Easton. The Lehigh's watershed is approximately 1,345 square-miles in area and consists of approximately 2,000 miles of streamways. It is a significant sub-basin within the Delaware River watershed.

The Lehigh River forms the geopolitical boundary between many of the ten counties within its watershed. The river flows through Wayne, Lackawanna, Luzerne, Monroe, Carbon, Lehigh, and Northampton counties. The largest cities – Allentown, Bethlehem, and Easton – are found on the banks of the Lehigh in the river's lower reaches. There are many smaller historic hamlets and villages sprinkled from top to bottom. The river is impounded in several places by dams the most significant of which is the Francis E. Walter Dam in Luzerne and Carbon counties.

At White Haven, the Lehigh River and its banks become part of Lehigh Gorge State Park. Over the next 32 miles, the river flows through a wilderness area and official Pennsylvania Scenic River section that is a mecca for whitewater boaters and mountain bikers. Near the town of Jim Thorpe and on into Bowmanstown, the river is characterized by calmer water and is widely enjoyed by kayakers, rafters, and canoeists.

At the Carbon-Lehigh-Northampton county line, the river makes a dramatic cut through the Blue Mountain. Called Lehigh Gap, it separates the upper portion of the watershed from the two-county "Lehigh Valley," as Lehigh and Northampton counties are called. The Lehigh River continues south past the historic towns of Walnutport, Slatington, Catasauqua, and Allentown where South Mountain deflects the Lehigh River's southward flow sharply to the east towards Bethlehem. At Bethlehem, the Lehigh River's speed continues to slow until it merges with the Delaware River after the dam in Easton.

FISHING OPPORTUNITIES

The Lehigh River supports a diverse fishery that includes trout, smallmouth bass, muskellunge, catfish, and American shad. The river is stocked with trout from White Haven to Jim Thorpe by the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission and by several local sport-fishing groups from Jim Thorpe to Allentown. Check the current fishing regulations and seasons before fishing the river. Review this year's fishing summary online at: www.fish.state.pa.us.

STEWARDSHIP

Leave no trace for camping and 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 campfires.
6. Respect wildlife.
7. Be considerate of other visitors.

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 on to 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 a 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 socks.
- **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 roped 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 your 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.

PENNSYLVANIA BOATING REGULATIONS

- One wearable, Coast Guard-approved personal flotation device (PFD or life jacket) in serviceable condition and of the appropriate sizes required for each person in your boat. If your 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 all children 12 years old 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 a 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 a white light (visible 360 degrees), installed or portable, ready to be displayed in time to avoid a collision.
- All motorboats are required to carry a sound-producing mechanical device audible for a half-mile. Athletic whistles meet this requirement.
- All motorboats must be registered, regardless of where they launch.
- Unpowered boats (canoes, kayaks, rowboats, rafts) using Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission access areas must either be registered OR display a valid launch permit. Launch permits can be purchased on the web at www.fish.state.pa.us. Click the "Outdoor Shop" icon.
- 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 & Boat Commission at www.fish.state.pa.us.

FLOATING THE RIVER

The size of the Lehigh River and the releases from the Francis E. Walter Dam make the river navigable in some way most days of the year. There are exceptions, however, particularly in the northern section of the Water Trail (above the Lehigh Gap), which should be monitored carefully in conditions of high flow. The northern section of the Water Trail where it passes through the Lehigh Gorge State Park contains Class II and III rapids requiring considerable expertise. It is not permitted for open canoes to float through this reach without special flotation devices installed in your boat. Nonetheless, some of the most exciting canoeing, rafting, and kayaking in the East is found here. The southern section is generally more subdued, but has some exciting rapids interspersed within its slower sections. This map will identify these areas for you. Remember, however, that due to intermittent water releases from the Francis E. Walter Dam, the water flow can be higher than recent rain activity would seem to indicate it should be. On the other hand, extreme drought conditions don't usually halt navigation; it only makes the boater's course more meandering. There is truly something for everyone here – the expert looking for adventure and the novice paddling family looking for a gentle ride. Paddling when air temperatures are below 55° Fahrenheit is unsafe. PFDs should be worn by all occupants at all times. If someone else gets in trouble and you do not have your PFD on, you might both drown. **Just wear it!**

There are several river outfitters and river guides in the Lehigh River valley, mostly in the northern section. Contact the regional tourist promotion agencies for a current list of outfitters. Many of these operators can also provide helpful information on current river conditions. All access points are indicated on the map, some of which are "primitive," which means they are more suitable for canoes and other car-top boats. In addition, Wildlands Conservancy (a non-profit conservation organization) operates its *Bike & Boat* education/recreation program for groups of all sizes and ages. **Contact them at www.wildlandspa.org or 610/965.4397 x36.**

WILDLIFE ALONG THE RIVER

One of the most significant raptor-migration routes in North America crosses the Lehigh River at Lehigh Gap. The physical aspects of Blue Mountain funnel every species of birds of prey (hawks, eagles) through the Lehigh River valley every year in the spring, but most abundantly in the autumn. Because the birds don't remain just on the ridge top as they move through, one can also see these impressive creatures in the valleys and riparian corridors. During the paddling season, one can see osprey, great blue heron, little green heron, merganser, wood duck, belted kingfisher, warbler of every stripe, and more. Black bear and rattlesnakes can be found in the upper reaches of the river; beaver, deer, fox, river otter, and muskrat can be found in many places along its entire length.



The Lehigh River Water Trail project was created as a partnership among Wildlands Conservancy, PA Fish & Boat Commission, PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Lehigh University, and the Delaware and Lehigh National Heritage Corridor Commission. This project was financed in part by a grant from the Pennsylvania Recreational Trails Program under the administration of the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR), Bureau of Recreation and Conservation. Funding for the original planning grant was provided by the PA Heritage Parks Program administered PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR), Bureau of Recreation and Conservation through the Delaware & Lehigh National Heritage Corridor Commission with technical assistance provided by Lehigh University's Lehigh Earth Observatory.

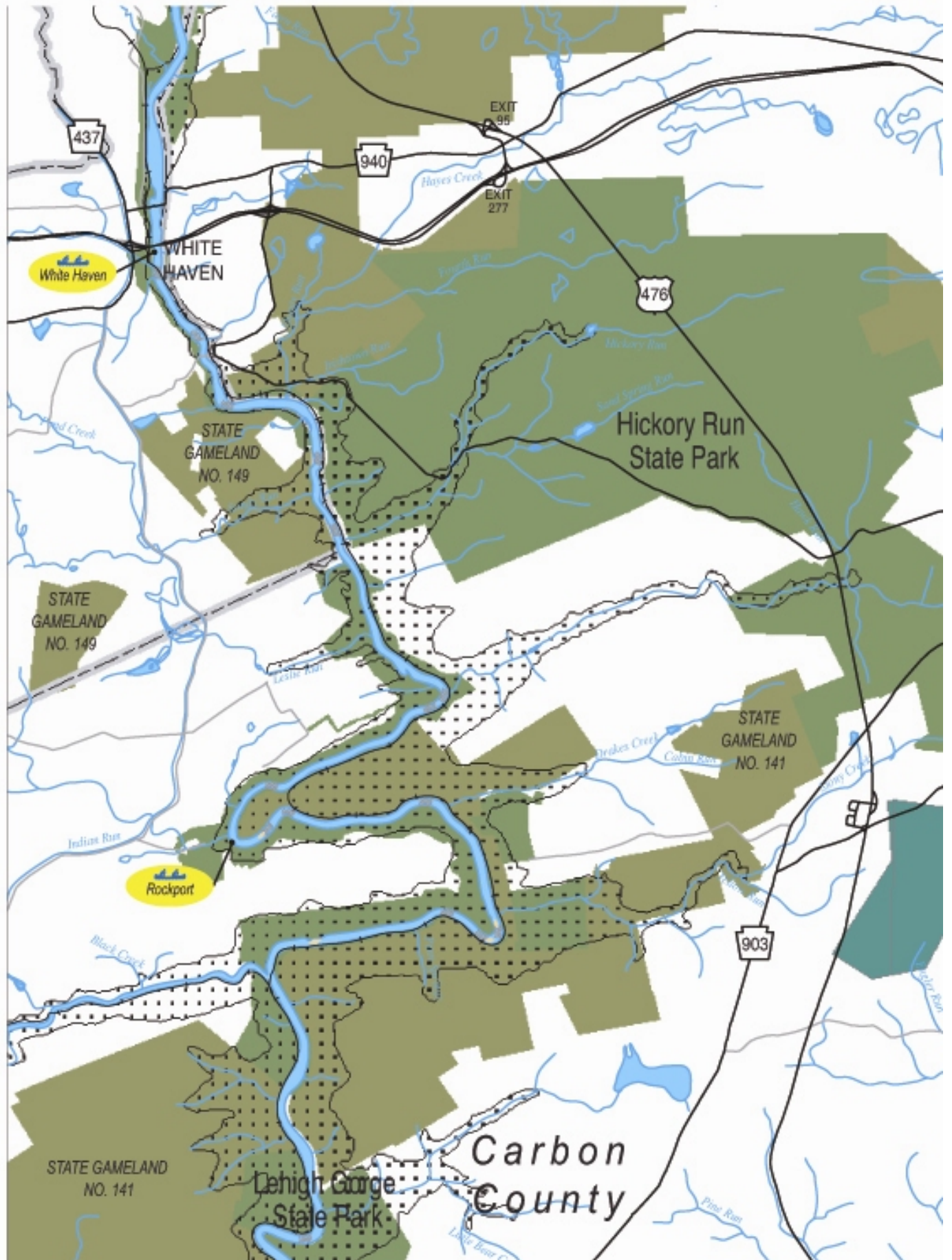
For more information, refer to these web sites:
PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources:
www.dcnr.state.pa.us
Wildlands Conservancy: www.wildlandspa.org
PA Fish & Boat Commission: www.fish.state.pa.us
Delaware and Lehigh National Heritage Corridor Commission:
www.cr.nps.gov/nr/travel/delaware
Lehigh University's Lehigh Earth Observatory:
www.leo.lehigh.edu
Lehigh Valley Canoe Club:
www.entor.net/~lvcc/

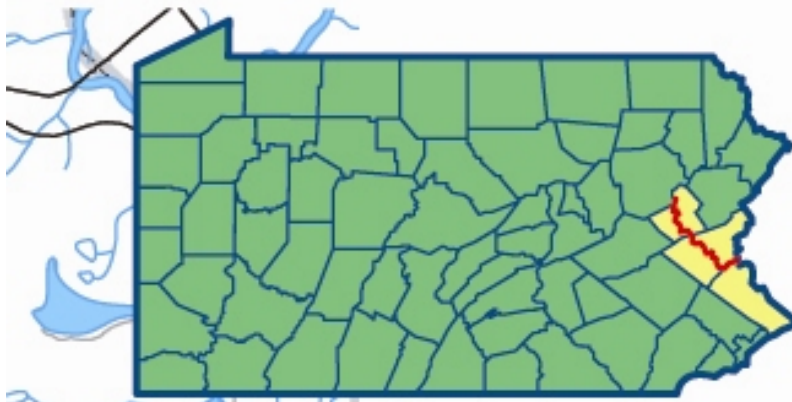
EMERGENCY NUMBERS

In most of the Lehigh River valley, **dialing 911** will get you help.

DELAWARE & LEHIGH NATIONAL HERITAGE CORRIDOR AND HERITAGE STATE PARK

Also known as "The D & L Corridor," this nationally significant area comprises five counties (Luzerne, Carbon, Lehigh, Northampton, and Bucks), parts of two rivers (Delaware and Lehigh), and covers 150 miles between Wilkes-Barre and Bristol (which is just north of Philadelphia). Highlighting 400 years of settlement and the rise of America's Industrial Revolution, the D & L Corridor is a reservoir of natural, cultural, historic, recreational, and economic resources that comprise our heritage. More information about the D & L Corridor can be found at www.nps.gov/delc/.





Look for this sign for access to the trail.

Legend

Access Points	Abutments
Canals	Rapids
Appalachian Trail	Stream
Minor Roads	Scenic River Areas
Major Roads	Urban Areas
Railroads	Counties and Watersheds
Open Water	State Park Lands
Obstructions	State Game Lands
Dams	State Forest Lands
Portage	

ALONG THE WAY—NORTHERN SECTION ABOVE THE LEHIGH GAP

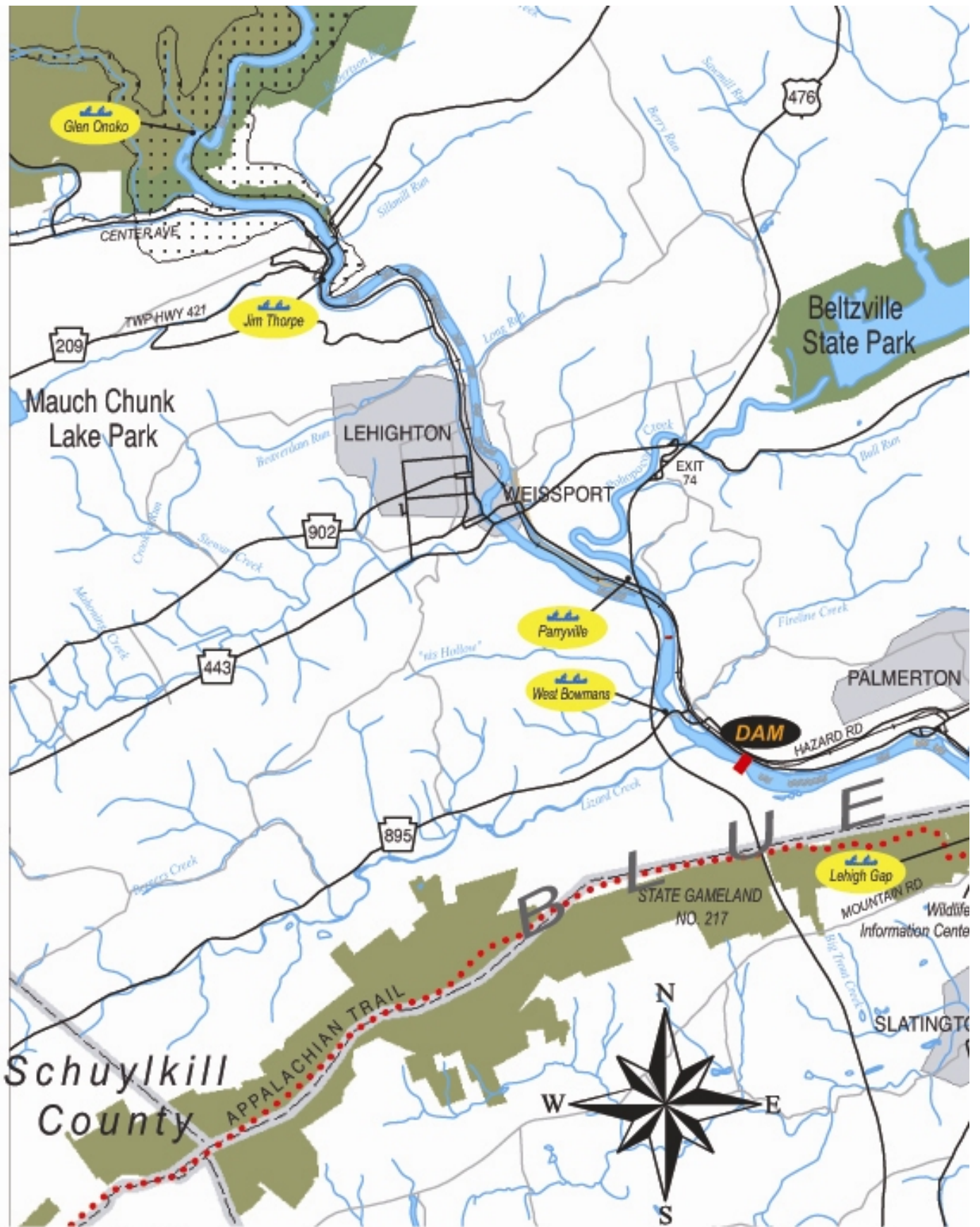


LOCK #28 AT WHITE HAVEN – One of 29 high-lift locks, #28, with a lift of 22 feet, is an example of the engineering and construction expertise necessary to turn the Lehigh River from a turbulent waterway into the slack-water navigation system called the Upper Grand Section of the Lehigh Navigation. Lock #28 is one of the few that survived the 1862 flood which forced the closing of this section of the navigation system.

LEHIGH TANNERY – Established along the Lehigh River because of the proximity to hemlock trees, the bark of which was used to tan animal hides, the Lehigh Tannery was located in a building 680 feet long. This tannery produced 50,000 tanned hides in 1855 making it the second largest producer of hides in America. It burned in 1875, but the remains of the tanning vats are still visible.

BUTTERMILK FALLS – This dramatic all-season waterfall appears to flow directly out of the cliff and forest that rises hundreds of feet above the surface of the Lehigh River. The falls are located a short distance up river from the Rockport access area.

LOCK #22 AT MUD RUN – The Mud Run lock is located 2.7 miles up river from the Rockport access area. The lock has been cleared of trees and has signage that explains the Upper Grand Section of the Lehigh Navigation, and how the 26-mile, slackwater navigation system, consisting of 20 dams and 29 locks between White Haven and Jim Thorpe, operated. On October 10, 1888, 64 people died in a Lehigh Valley Railroad train wreck across the Lehigh River from the lock.



Source: Lehigh Earth Observatory





PENN HAVEN INCLINE PLANES – These inclined planes were built to raise and lower rail cars from the rim of the mountain to the canal boats below using a stationary steam-engine power source at the top of the mountain. The path to the right (up-river side) of Lock #12 leads to the top of the old incline and has a great view of the river valley below.

GLEN ONOKO FALLS – According to Native American legend, Onoko, a Native American princess, jumped to her death at the falls when her love affair came to a tragic end. In the 1870s, the charms of the falls of Glen Onoko were recognized and the Lehigh Valley Railroad built a railroad station there.

In 1886, Hotel Wahneta, located on river left, was built to further encourage visitors. The hotel was destroyed in a forest fire in 1911. The magnificent series of waterfalls are well worth the hike.

JIM THORPE – Known as the “Switzerland of America” and formerly called Mauch Chunk, this beautiful little town was a boomtown in the heyday of the Lehigh Navigation, and later, the Lehigh Valley Railroad. Many historic buildings are found there, including an old railroad station that contains a fine museum, the Asa and Harry Packer mansions, an opera house, a historic jail, the Switchback Railroad, many fine shops and stores, and Jim Thorpe’s (himself) own mausoleum.

Go interactive and online with the Lehigh River Water Trail:
www.wildlandspa.org

