Schuylkill River Water Trail – Upper 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.**

NATIONAL RECREATION TRAIL

National Recreation Trails (NRT) provide for numerous outdoor recreation activities in a variety of urban, rural and remote areas. By 2000, over 800 trails in all 50 states, available for public use and ranging from less than a mile to 485 miles in length, have been designated as NRTs on federal, state, municipal and privately owned lands.

The Schuylkill River Water Trail, designated a National Recreational Trail, runs the 147-mile length of the Schuylkill River to the confluence of the Schuylkill with the main stem of the Delaware River in the city of Philadelphia. Along the water trail, there are several places where landings for the water trail overlap with trailheads for the Schuylkill River Trail, the 135-mile regional land trail. The Schuylkill River Water Trail Guide was printed and available to the public in May 2002 from the Schuylkill River National & State Heritage Area, (484) 945-0200. The annual Schuylkill River Sojourn utilizes the Schuylkill River Water Trail for an exciting 7-day paddle from Schuylkill Haven to Philadelphia. And now communities all along the river are beginning to recognize the Schuylkill River Water Trail as both a recreational asset and opportunity.

THE SCHUYLKILL RIVER WATER TRAIL

Three and a half centuries ago, Dutch explorers named it the "Schuylkill"- the "hidden river."

It's an equally exciting discovery today: a 147-mile river corridor rich with historical and natural treasures. The river valley's five counties-Berks, Chester, Montgomery, Philadelphia, and Schuylkillare inhabited by some 3.2 million people. The valley boasts abundant cultural, natural, and recreational resources; landmark sites of national significance; and historic communities and landscapes with uncounted stories to tell of the region's heritage.

The Schuylkill River played an important role in the development of this nation's history as a transportation route for goods to and from the Philadelphia market at its confluence with the Delaware River. In the 19th and early 20th century these waters ran thick with the coal silt and acid mine drainage that were byproducts of the coal industry to the north. Since cleanup operations in the mid-1900s, the Schuylkill has once again regained its health and is being reclaimed as a vital commons for the diverse cities, towns, villages, hamlets, and neighborhoods that line its banks. Today the Schuylkill River is being rediscovered as a recreational destination for boaters of all experience levels. There are serene stretches suitable for the beginner and challenging rapids for the more advanced boater. Please use the information contained in this guide to plan your discovery of "the hidden river."

RESPECT THE PRIVACY & RIGHTS OF LANDOWNERS

Please respect the privacy and rights of landowners along the Schuylkill 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.

FISHING OPPORTUNITIES

The Schuylkill River supports a diverse fishery that includes trout, smallmouth bass, striped bass, catfish and American shad. A trout fishery exists from the river's headwaters to Port Clinton. The river is a popular smallmouth bass and channel catfish fishery from Hamburg to Philadelphia. The lowest section of the river below the Fairmont dam offers striped bass and American shad in addition to other fishes. Check out the current fishing regulations, seasons, and consumption advisories before fishing the river. www.fish.state.pa.us

STEWARDSHIP

Help care for the land, water and cultural resources along the Schuylkill 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.**

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 sizeis 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 Schuylkill River is considered a Class I-II+ river. On a scale of I-VI, Class I denotes moving water with a few riffles and small waves and few or no obstructions. Class II denotes easy rapids with small waves and clear channels that are obvious without scouting. Some maneuvering might be required.

The best time to run the Schuylkill is early summer. The normal summer flow of the Schuylkill River accommodates small, shallow-draft powered and non-powered watercraft. Motorized watercrafts are used in areas where deeper water allows, including above Flat Rock & Black Rock dams, Norristown and Port Indian. In late summer, the river becomes shallow at times and boat bottoms can drag on the streambed, especially in the upper reaches. Your float time will vary depending season, weather and Blue Marsh Lake releases. Contact the Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) for updated information about river conditions. For more information about the Schuylkill River's current conditions, visit the USGS real-time streamflow web site: **http://waterdata.usgs.gov/pa/nwis/current?type=flow**

Remember, when it's hot, wear light clothing, sunglasses, and a hat. Apply sunblock and drink plenty of fluids. Dehydration can contribute to impaired judgment.

Avoid cotton clothing on the river, which does not dry as quickly as wool, pile, or polypropylene. Never attempt to paddle over or near a dam and avoid strainers (trees in the river). Give strainers as much room as possible. Keep a safe distance between other boats when approaching rapids. Do not exceed the capacity of your boat and keep weight centered and as low as possible at all times.

Be courteous to other river users-move to the other side of the river when encountering anglers and wildlife. Be considerate of others-at busy put-ins and take-outs, clear out of the way for other boats as quickly as possible. Use only small, downed dead wood for campfires. Use existing fire rings or camp stoves. Respect wildlife. Clean and wash away from the river. Leave what you find and pack out what you pack in.

For more information on events and activities within the watershed of the Schuylkill River, visit the web site for the Schuylkill River National and State Heritage Area: **www.schuylkillriver.org** More detailed water trail guides can be purchased online from this web site, or in person at the Heritage Area offices at 140 College Drive, Pottstown, PA.

WILDLIFE ALONG THE RIVER

One of the most significant raptor migration routes in North America crosses the Schuylkill River at Port Clinton. 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, many kinds of warbler, and more. Black bear and beaver, mink and rattlesnakes can be found in the upper reaches of the river; deer, fox and muskrat can be found in many places along its entire length.

Purchase more detailed water trail guides online at:
www.schuylkillriver.org

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Agencies and organizations

Schuylkill River Water Trail: PFBC web site: **www.fish.state.pa.us**; and Schuylkill River National & State Heritage Area web site: **www.schuylkillriver.org**.
Fishing Licenses, boat registrations, and boating regulations, stocked streams and related matters, call the PFBC at **(814) 337-0444**, order online at **www.fish.state.pa.us**.
DCNR state parks and state forests: call **(888) PAPARKS**
Pennsylvania Game Lands: call **(717) 787-6286**, **www.pgc.state.pa.us**.
Philadelphia History: Historical Society of Pennsylvania: **www.hsp.org**.
Montgomery County History: call the Historical Society of Montgomery County: **(610) 272-0297**, **www.hsmcpa.org**.
Chester County History: call the Chester County Historical Society: **(610) 692-4800**, **www.chestercohistorical.org**.
Berks County History: call the Historical Society of Berks County: **(610) 375-4375**.
Schuylkill County History: call the Historical Society of Schuylkill County: **(570) 622-7540**.
Schuylkill Headwaters Association: www.pottsville.com/headwaters.
Delaware River Basin Commission: call **(609) 883-9500**, **www.state.nj.us/drbc/contact.htm.**

EMERGENCY NUMBERS

Emergency: **911**

Hospitals: Thomas Jefferson Univ. Hospital,
Philadelphia (215) 955-6000
Univ. of Penn Hospital,
Philadelphia 1-800-789-PENN
Phoenixville Medical Center,
Phoenixville (215) 983-1000
Pottstown Memorial Medical Center,
Pottstown (610) 327-7000
Reading Hospital, Reading (610) 988-8000
St. Joseph's Hospital,
Reading (610) 378-2000
Pottsville Hospital & Warne Clinic,
Pottsville (570) 621-5000
Good Samaritan Regional Med. Center,
Pottsville (570) 621-4000

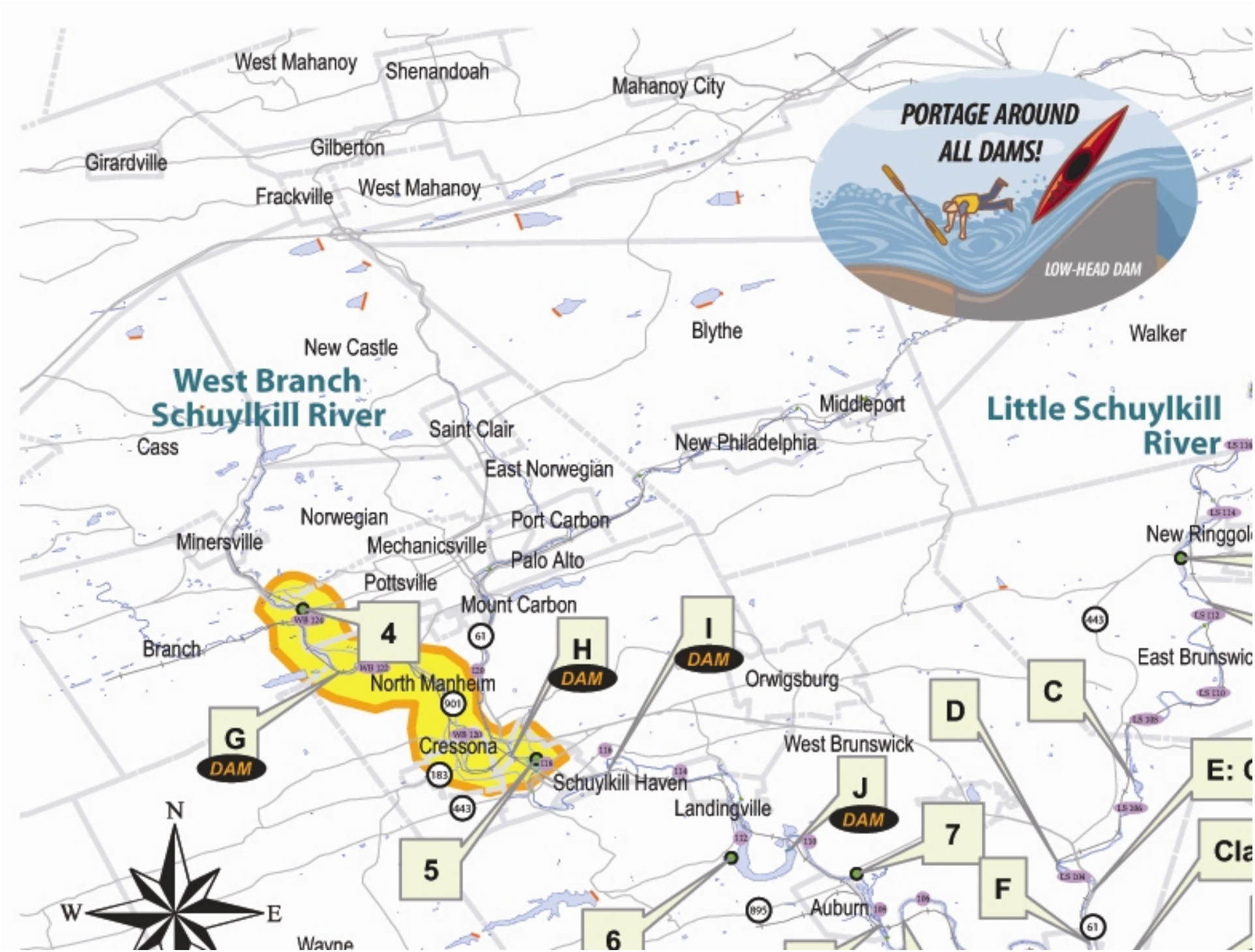
Please be aware that in some remote locations of the trail, signal access for cell phones may be limited.

Recreational Information

Philadelphia Convention And Visitors Bureau: call **(215) 636-1666** or **800-537-7676**, **www.pcvb.org**.
Valley Forge Convention and Visitors Bureau: call **(888)-VISITVF**, **www.valleyforge.org**.
Chester County Tourist Bureau: call **(800) 228-9933**, **www.brandywinevalley.com**.
Reading & Berks County Visitor's Bureau: call **(610) 375-4085**, **www.readingberks.com**.
Schuylkill County Visitors Bureau: call **(800) 765-7282**, **www.schuylkill.org**.
Eastern Schuylkill Recreation Commission: call **(570) 668-2919, www.easternschuylkillrec.com/esrc/id2.html**.

Canoe Rentals

Appalachian Outfitters: call **(610) 562-9343**
Brandywine Outfitters: for large groups only call: **1-800-CANOES-8, www.canoepa.com**.


PORTAGE AROUND ALL DAMS!
LOW-HEAD DAM
West Mahanoy
Shenandoah
Mahanoy City
Girardville
Gilberton
Frackville
West Mahanoy
Blythe
Walker
New Castle
West Branch Schuylkill River
Middleport
Little Schuylkill River
Saint Clair
New Philadelphia
Cass
East Norwegian
Norwegian
Port Carbon
Minersville
Mechanicsville
Palo Alto
Pottsville
Mount Carbon
Branch
North Manheim
Orwigsburg
East Brunswic
Cressona
West Brunswick
Schuylkill Haven
Landingville
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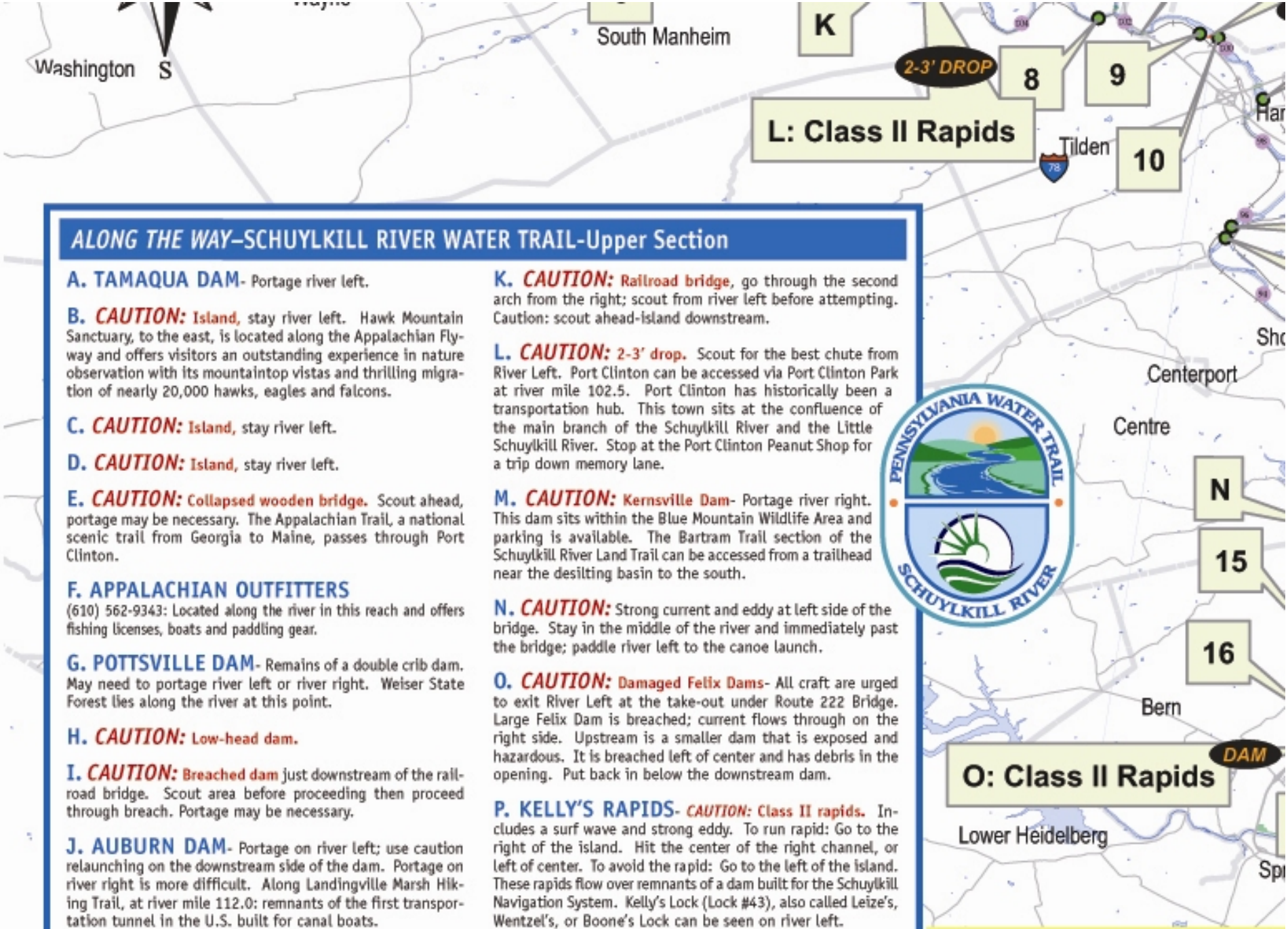
Access Points

1. **TAMAQUA SENIOR CENTER** (river right)- Parking for up to 10 cars at Tamaqua Senior Center, owned by the city of Tamaqua. Overnight parking is available. Places to eat are located one block from access. For more dining information contact SCVB. Visit the renovated Tamaqua Train Station, Schuylkill River Heritage Area Visitor's Center, and Hegarty's Blacksmith Shop. The section from this access to Tamaqua Dam (1) is for *EXPERIENCED PADDLERS ONLY.* **Various hazards are located within this section.** Lat: N40 47.689 Long: W75 57.976
2. **TAMAQUA DAM** (river left)- Located in South Tamaqua and owned by DEP, it offers parking. Put-in after portage should occur below the dam.
3. **NEW RINGGOLD** (river left)- Parking is available across the bridge from the Wilderness Trekker. Canoe Livery: The Wilderness Trekker, (570) 943-3151, www.wildernesstrekker.com For local restaurant information contact: SCVB. Lat: N40 41.160 Long: W76 00.132
4. **TERRY REILLY MEMORIAL PICNIC AREA AND CANOE LANDING-POTTSVILLE** (River Left)- Park between the river and Route 901. For lodging and restaurant information contact SCVB. Visit the mansions along Mahantango Street, 2 blocks south of Market Street. The section from this access to Schuylkill Haven Island Park (4) is for *EXPERIENCED PADDLERS ONLY.* **Various hazards are located within this section.** Lat: N40 40.345 Long: W76 14.169
5. **SCHUYLKILL HAVEN ISLAND PARK** (river right)- Parking for 15+ cars available at Schuylkill Haven Island Park. Access owned by the borough of Schuylkill Haven. Lodging and restaurants available in downtown Schuylkill Haven along Route 61. For more information contact: SCVB. Hiking trail around Schuylkill Haven Island Park. Bartram Trail, a section of the Schuylkill River Trail, is under construction. This trail will eventually connect Pottsville to Philadelphia. Lat: N40 37.972 Long: W76 10.428
6. **AUBURN DAM ACCESS, PA FISH & BOAT COMMISSION** (river right)- PA Fish and Boat Commission access is reached from the southern driveway. Lat: N40 36.380 Long: W76 07.332
7. **AUBURN RTE 895 TRAILHEAD** (river left)- Parking available for 15 cars. Groceries and gas are available on Route 895 east of Landingville. Turn right as you leave the parking lot. Lodging and restaurants are available along Route 61. For more information contact: SCVB. Lat: N40 36.096 Long: W76 05.289
8. **PORT CLINTON PARK** (river left)- Parking is available along Broad Street by the train tracks. Please respect private property, follow the signs provided by owner. Picnic area and camping at Port Clinton Park, Schuylkill Street. Camping by permission only. Call City Hall at (610) 562-8025. Toilet facilities are available at the Port Clinton Park baseball field. Lodging and restaurants are available in Port Clinton and along Route 61. For more information contact the Schuylkill County Visitors Bureau (SCVB), (800) 765-7282, www.schuylkill.org. The Transportation Museum on Penn Street contains canal memorabilia.



ALONG THE WAY–SCHUYLKILL RIVER WATER TRAIL-Upper Section

A. TAMAQUA DAM- Portage river left.

B. *CAUTION:* Island, stay river left. Hawk Mountain Sanctuary, to the east, is located along the Appalachian Flyway and offers visitors an outstanding experience in nature observation with its mountaintop vistas and thrilling migration of nearly 20,000 hawks, eagles and falcons.

C. *CAUTION:* Island, stay river left.

D. *CAUTION:* Island, stay river left.

E. *CAUTION:* Collapsed wooden bridge. Scout ahead, portage may be necessary. The Appalachian Trail, a national scenic trail from Georgia to Maine, passes through Port Clinton.

F. APPALACHIAN OUTFITTERS
(610) 562-9343: Located along the river in this reach and offers fishing licenses, boats and paddling gear.

G. POTTSVILLE DAM- Remains of a double crib dam. May need to portage river left or river right. Weiser State Forest lies along the river at this point.

H. *CAUTION:* Low-head dam.

I. *CAUTION:* Breached dam just downstream of the railroad bridge. Scout area before proceeding then proceed through breach. Portage may be necessary.

J. AUBURN DAM- Portage on river left; use caution relaunching on the downstream side of the dam. Portage on river right is more difficult. Along Landingville Marsh Hiking Trail, at river mile 112.0: remnants of the first transportation tunnel in the U.S. built for canal boats.

K. *CAUTION:* Railroad bridge, go through the second arch from the right; scout from river left before attempting. Caution: scout ahead-island downstream.

L. *CAUTION:* 2-3' drop. Scout for the best chute from River Left. Port Clinton can be accessed via Port Clinton Park at river mile 102.5. Port Clinton has historically been a transportation hub. This town sits at the confluence of the main branch of the Schuylkill River and the Little Schuylkill River. Stop at the Port Clinton Peanut Shop for a trip down memory lane.

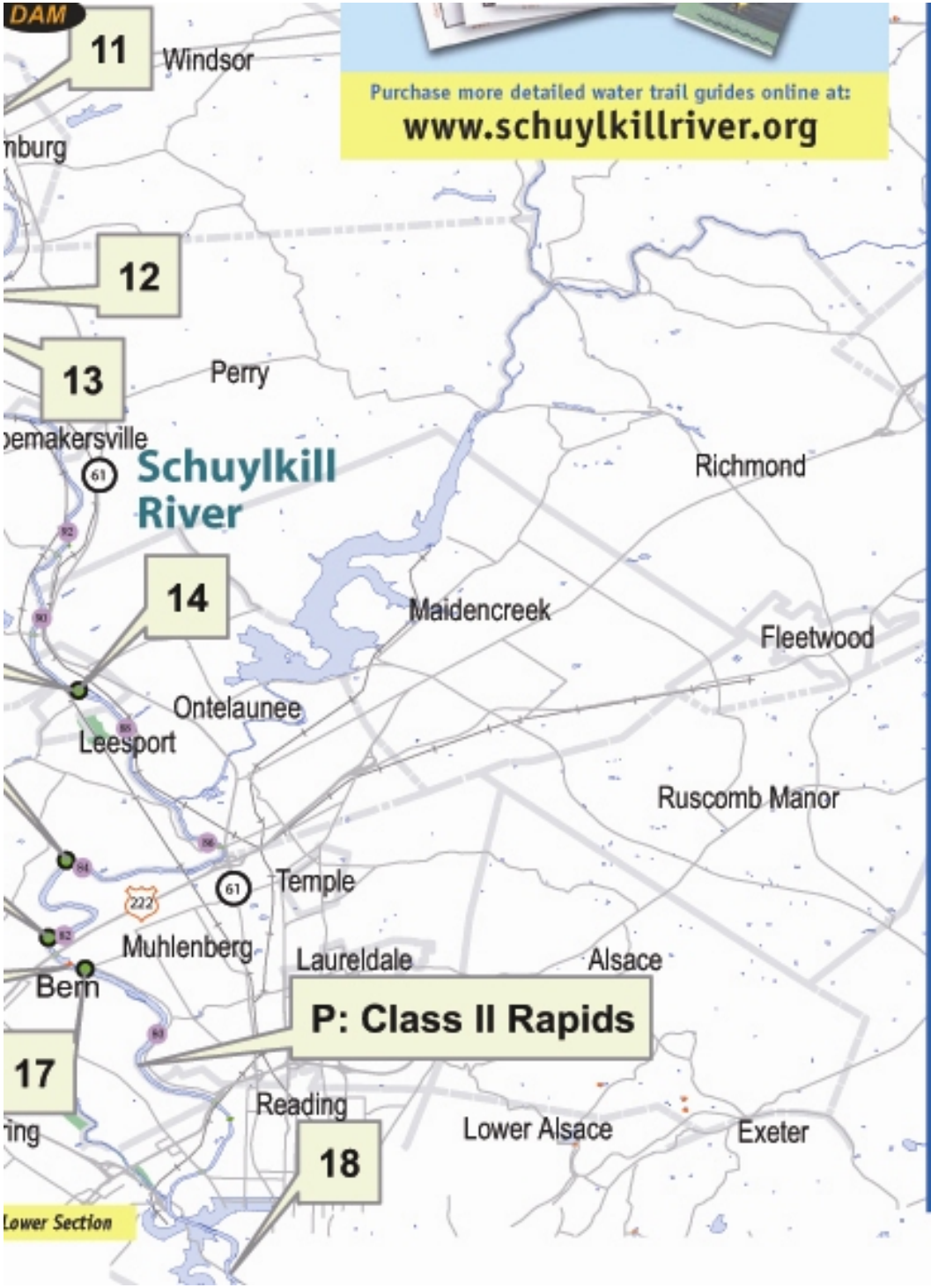
M. *CAUTION:* Kernsville Dam- Portage river right. This dam sits within the Blue Mountain Wildlife Area and parking is available. The Bartram Trail section of the Schuylkill River Land Trail can be accessed from a trailhead near the desilting basin to the south.

N. *CAUTION:* Strong current and eddy at left side of the bridge. Stay in the middle of the river and immediately past the bridge; paddle river left to the canoe launch.

O. *CAUTION:* Damaged Felix Dams- All craft are urged to exit River Left at the take-out under Route 222 Bridge. Large Felix Dam is breached; current flows through on the right side. Upstream is a smaller dam that is exposed and hazardous. It is breached left of center and has debris in the opening. Put back in below the downstream dam.

P. KELLY'S RAPIDS- ***CAUTION:* Class II rapids.** Includes a surf wave and strong eddy. To run rapid: Go to the right of the island. Hit the center of the right channel, or left of center. To avoid the rapid: Go to the left of the island. These rapids flow over remnants of a dam built for the Schuylkill Navigation System. Kelly's Lock (Lock #43), also called Leize's, Wentzel's, or Boone's Lock can be seen on river left.

Map continued on Schuylkill River Water Trail Guide–



Lat: N40 34.649 Long: W76 01.827

9. **KERNSVILLE LANDING** (river right)- (currently closed as of Jan. 2003) A parking lot and carry-in trail 1/4-mile above this location now provides access. Lat: N40 34.420 Long: W76 00.294
10. **KERNSVILLE LANDING** (river right)- Parking available at the dam. A carry-in trail exists below the dam with access. Places to eat are along Jetson and Industrial Drive. Trailhead for Bartram Trail and Blue Mountain Wildlife Recreation Area. Lat: N40 34.370 Long: W75 59.990
11. **HAMBURG PARK** (river left)- Parking, picnic tables, and toilet facilities available. Access to the Bartram Trail section of the Schuylkill River Trail-will eventually connect Pottsville to Philadelphia. Restaurants available in downtown Hamburg and along Route 61. For more information contact: R&BCVB. Lat: N40 33.398 Long: W75 59.310
12. **FIVE LOCKS PA FISH & BOAT COMMISSION** (river left)- Parking available. Lat: N40 31.442 Long: W75 59.761
13. **PETER YARNELL LANDING AT BERNE** (river left)- Parking available in a gravel lot for 10 cars. Picnic shelter is available. Lat: N40 31.238 Long: W75 59.903
14. **LEESPORT CANOE LAUNCH** (river left)-Parking is available behind the post office. Food and restrooms available at establishments along Route 61. For more information contact: R&BCVB. Post office at Wall Street Bridge. Laundromat along Wall Street. Leesport Lockhouse along Wall Street, 2 blocks west of Rte. 61, next to the car wash. The remains of a lock structure are behind the car wash. Herbein's Guard Lock remains can be viewed along Washington Street and along the riverside walking trail. Lat: N40 26.742 Long: W75 58.090
15. **STOUDT'S FERRY LANDING** (river right)- Parking and picnic shelter available. Lat: N40 24.715 Long: W75 58.221
16. **EPLER'S LANDING-PFBC** (river right)- Parking available. Damaged Felix Dams-due to changing conditions at dams. This is an exclusion zone that is mandatory. All boats MUST exit the river and re-enter using the vehicular portage route. Directions from Epler's: Cedar Hill Dr.-Left onto Stinson Dr.-Left onto Leiscz's Bridge Road-Right onto Van Reed Road-Right onto Rte. 183 North-Exit @ Rte 222 North-Exit @ Rte 61 South-Right onto Tuckerton Road-Left onto River Road. The entrance to the Township's Felix Dam Park is on your right where Whitner meets River Road. Re-enter the river at this point. Lat: N40 23.783 Long: W75 58.426
17. **FELIX DAM PARK-MUHLENBERG TOWNSHIP** (river left)- Parking available for 10+ cars. Picnic tables available. Follow nature path upstream to Felix's Lock Chamber and Dam. Restaurants available along Route 61. For more information, contact: R&BCVB Lat: N40 23.447 Long: W75 58.036
18. **READING (KERPER'S) LANDING AT RIVERFRONT PARK** (river left)- Parking is available along the street. A picnic shelter is available in the park. The Pagoda, a Reading landmark, is visible from the river (RL) atop Mount Penn. A variety of restaurants and lodging are available in both Reading and West Reading. For more information contact: Reading & Berks County Visitor's Bureau (R&BCVB), 610-375-4085, www.readingberks.com. Lat: N40 19.817 Long: W75 56.277