Marsh Creek State Park

Marsh Creek State Park is in the rolling hills of north central Chester County. The 1,784-acre park contains the 535-acre Marsh Creek Lake, which is a wonderful resource for fishing, sailing, and wildlife watching.

Directions

East Launch Area
GPS DD: Lat. 40.06805 Long. -75.71925

The park is about two miles west of the village of Eagle, off PA 100. Access the park from the Downingtown Exit 312 of the Pennsylvania Turnpike. From PA 100 north in Eagle, follow signs to the east side of the park, which has the park office, swimming pool, and boat rental.

West Launch Area
GPS DD: Lat. 40.06485 Long. -75.72956

The equestrian concession and stable, most trails, and 24-hour boat launch access are located on the west side of the park at 800 North Reeds Road, Downingtown, Pa.



Reservations

Make online reservations at www.visitPAparks.com or call toll-free 888-PA-PARKS (888-727-2757), 7:00 AM to 5:00 PM, Monday to Saturday.

Learn, Experience, Connect

Marsh Creek State Park offers a wide variety of programs from spring through fall. Gain a better understanding of the park's natural, cultural, and historical resources through guided outdoor recreation, hands-on activities, walks, special events, and other programs.



Curriculum-based environmental education programs are available to schools and organized groups. Call the park office to schedule a group program. A variety of professional development workshops are also offered for teachers.

Self-guided backpacks are available for loan at the park office. The backpacks offer unique educational activities for visitors who wish to explore and learn on their own. Topics include birds; insects; trees and wildflowers; amphibians, reptiles, and aquatic insects; and animals tracks and traces. To borrow a backpack, please call the park office. 610-458-5119

Contact the park office or explore the online calendar of events, https://events.dcnr.pa.gov, for more information on programs and other learning experiences.



Recreational Opportunities



BOATING: electric motors permitted
The 535-acre Marsh Creek Lake has two boat launches and approximately 240 seasonal mooring slips. The lake is especially popular with sailboaters who take advantage of the combination of good natural terrain and prevailing winds.

A boat rental concession at the East Launch offers rowboats, canoes, kayaks, paddleboards, sailboats, and lake tours throughout the summer. Weather permitting, rentals may be offered on weekends during the spring and fall, 610-458-5040. www.marshcreeklake.com

A snack bar by the boat rental is open in the summer and weekends in the spring and fall.

Motorboats must display a boat registration from any state. Non-powered boats must display one of the following: boat registration from any state; launch permit or mooring permit from Pennsylvania State Parks, available at most state park offices; launch use permit from the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission.

♿ **SWIMMING POOL:** The ADA accessible swimming pool and sprayground attract many visitors. The guarded pool is open Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day unless posted otherwise. A large grassy area and shower house are in the swimming pool complex. A pavilion is available to rent. A snack bar is open during the summer season, 610-458-8535. www.marshcreekparkpool.com

Swimming is prohibited in Marsh Creek Lake.

PICNICKING: Several picnic areas with picnic tables, restrooms, and charcoal grills are available year round. A playground is near the pool complex and picnic area.

♿ **HUNTING AND FIREARMS:** Approximately 950 acres are open to hunting, trapping, and the training of dogs during established seasons. Common game species are rabbits, squirrels, pheasants, waterfowl, and deer.

Hunting woodchucks, also known as groundhogs, is prohibited. Dog training is only permitted from the day following Labor Day through March 31 in designated hunting areas. The Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and the Pennsylvania Game Commission rules and regulations apply. Contact the park office for ADA accessible hunting information.

Use extreme caution with firearms at all times. Other visitors use the park during hunting seasons. Firearms and archery equipment used for hunting may be uncased and ready for use only in authorized hunting areas during hunting seasons. In areas not open to hunting or during non-hunting seasons, firearms and archery equipment shall be kept in the owner's vehicle or enclosed trailer. Exceptions include: law enforcement officers and individuals with a valid *Pennsylvania License to Carry Firearms* are authorized to carry a firearm concealed on their person while they are within a state park.



FISHING: The 535-acre Marsh Creek Lake is an excellent lake to fish for warmwater species. Some anglers have landed 40-inch-long tiger muskellunges. Other species include largemouth bass, channel catfish, black crappie, and a variety of panfish. The lake is designated a Big Bass Lake and specific regulations apply. Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission regulations and laws apply.

CAMPING: There is no overnight camping at Marsh Creek State Park. A privately-owned campground on PA 282 is located within one mile of the park. French Creek State Park is 15 miles to the north and has a campground, camping cottages, yurts, and modern cabins.



HORSEBACK RIDING: Equestrian trails and horse trailer parking are on the west side of the park. Trails have loops of various distances. Use extreme caution when riding in hunting areas during hunting seasons.

With an emphasis on families and fun, Hope Springs Farm offers horseback riding lessons, boarding, and trail riding, 610-321-1960. www.hopespringshorsefarm.com

ICE SPORTS: Ice skating, ice fishing, and iceboating are popular activities during the winter season.

Ice thickness is not monitored. For your safety, make sure ice is at least 4" thick for a single user, 7" thick for a small group, and at least 6" thick for ice boating. Always carry safety equipment.

MOUNTAIN BIKING: See reverse side.

History

Marsh Creek State Park was named for the main source of water supply for the park reservoir. The headwaters of Marsh Creek rise in a swamp northwest of the park.

The land that is now the park was formerly a combination of rolling, wooded hills and small farms located on both sides of the Marsh Creek stream valley. The former village of Milford Mills was the only concentration of dwellings and people inside what is now the park. Within Milford Mills was the Murphy Mansion, which was owned by Mike Murphy until his death in 1917. His 168-acre estate, which included the mansion, barns, stables, and a tenant house, comprised almost the entire village of Milford Mills. Murphy, his family, and an enormous staff resided in Milford Mills, where he raised and trained racehorses. The remains of the Murphy Mansion and the rest of Milford Mills were demolished during park development. The land outside of Milford Mills was populated by those living on scattered small farms.

The village had some local notoriety, dating back to the 1930s when Max "Boo Boo" Hoff bought the 44-room Murphy Mansion located in Milford Mills and spent the summers of 1930 to 1935 there. Hoff was reputed to be Philadelphia's top bootlegger and gangland figure during Prohibition years and coincidentally, several unsolved murders took place during his stay in the area.

A record of storms extending back to 1920 indicated frequent flooding in the Brandywine watershed, which at the time included Milford Mills. Other problems included water shortages and lack of recreational opportunities for residents and nearby towns. The Brandywine Water Resources Committee was formed in 1954 by major water users in the watershed. The committee contacted Secretary Goddard of the Pennsylvania Department of Forests and Waters requesting the agency become a partner in a dam project with the watershed. In 1959, a plan was approved by representatives from the states of Pennsylvania and Delaware for the construction of a series of dams and reservoirs in Pennsylvania, above Downingtown and Coatesville on tributaries of both branches of the Brandywine Creek. The idea was to store water in the winter and release it in the summer to equalize control and need. In 1960, the Department of Environmental Resources acquired all land rights above the top of dam elevation for recreational purposes under the provisions of the Project 70 Land Acquisition and Borrowing Act.

Construction of the dam occurred between May 1970 and June 1973. The area was cleared of trees, stumps, hedgerows, and buildings. The impoundment was created by a 90-foot-high, 990-foot-long, earth and rock fill dam on Marsh Creek. The gates of the dam were closed November 16, 1973, and the lake reached normal pool stage on June 21, 1974. At normal pool elevation of 359.5 feet above sea level, the impoundment covers an area of 535 acres with a maximum depth of 80 feet at the dam.

The Marsh Creek Lake drainage basin consists of 20.4 square miles in northcentral Chester County and lies within the Brandywine Creek sub-basin of the Delaware River basin. The main waterways in the drainage basin are Marsh Creek, Black Horse Creek, Indian Run, and Jerry Run.



Built in 1854 to span Marsh Creek in the center of Milford Mills, Larkin covered bridge was relocated to a Upper Uwchlan township trail.

Wildlife Watching

BIRDING: The park's numerous habitats are havens for birds and wildlife. Over 200 species of birds have been recorded within the park. During the spring and fall, the fishing docks are a great place to look for migrating waterfowl and raptors, including common loons, ring-necked ducks, American wigeons, redheads, ospreys, and bald eagles. On the west side of the park, White Trail offers great views of the various habitats within the park as it meanders along the edge of the lake, up to the dam, and back through the agricultural fields.

NATIVE AND WARM SEASON GRASS FIELDS: When the park was created in the 1970s, most of the land had small farms or residences for people who worked in nearby mills. Nearly half of the park's acreage was flooded to create Marsh Creek Lake, while some of the remaining land was converted into agricultural and warm season grass fields.

The warm season grass fields were planted with native species like Indian grass, big and little bluestem, and switchgrass. These fields provide a critical habitat which is rare in Pennsylvania and benefits many species of grassland birds, including horned larks, eastern meadowlarks, bobolinks, savannah sparrows, northern harriers, and American kestrels.

FISH: Marsh Creek Lake contains a variety of artificial fish habitat structures, including post clusters, felled shoreline trees, rock stars, black bass nesting structures, porcupine cribs, spider humps, and turtle basking platforms. These manmade structures mimic natural habitats, providing the necessary environment for aquatic life. More information on fish habitat can be found online at www.fishandboat.com/Resource/Habitat

Nearby Attractions

Information on nearby attractions is available from the Chester County Conference and Visitors Bureau. 484-770-8550. www.brandywinevalley.com

Located 15 miles to the north, in Elverson, Pa., **French Creek State Park** offers a variety of overnight accommodations including organized group tenting, camping, and year-round cabins. The park's two lakes provide boating and fishing opportunities. Seasonally, a swimming pool and education programs are available. 610-582-9680

Struble Trail is a great 2.6-mile local hiking and biking trail that leads into Downingtown where users can enjoy local shopping and restaurants. Along the way, visitors can enjoy the rambling Brandywine Creek, as well as plenty of wooded sections and picnic areas. The trail can be accessed from Dorlan Mill Road, near the dam at Marsh Creek State Park.

Upper Uwchlan Township has two day-use parks with fields, picnicking, playgrounds, and pavilions. **Hickory Park** is the closest, located just outside of Marsh Creek's entrance, and offers a variety of playing fields/courts for sports including rugby, football, basketball, soccer, and tennis. www.upperuwchlan-pa.gov/249/Parks-and-Facilities

Wallace Township parks offer picnicking areas and playfields. www.wallacetwp.org

East Brandywine Township's Bondsville Mill Park is a historic site with grist mill ruins and hiking trails. www.ebrandywine.org

Chester County's parks have trails, playfields, picnicking, fishing, camping, wildflower areas, historic sites, and a demonstration farm. www.chesco.org

Access for People with Disabilities

♿ This symbol indicates facilities and activities that are Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessible for people with disabilities. This publication text is available in alternative formats.

If you need an accommodation to participate in park activities due to a disability, please contact the park you plan to visit.

In an Emergency

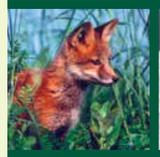
Call 911 and contact a park employee. Directions to the nearest hospital are posted on bulletin boards and at the park office.

NEAREST HOSPITAL
Chester County Hospital
701 East Marshall Street
West Chester, PA 19380
610-431-5000

A Pennsylvania Recreational Guide for

Marsh Creek State Park

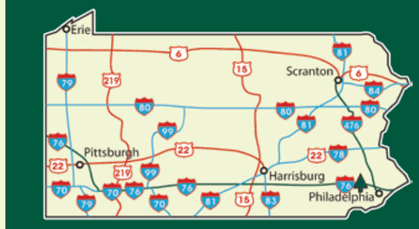








pennsylvania
DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND NATURAL RESOURCES



Marsh Creek State Park
675 Park Road
Downingtown, PA 19335-1898
610-458-5119
MarshCreekSP@pa.gov

Make online reservations at:
www.visitPAparks.com or call toll-free 888-PA-PARKS (888-727-2757), 7:00 AM to 5:00 PM, Monday to Saturday.

www.visitPAparks.com visitPAparks

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Protect and Preserve Our Parks

Please make your visit safe and enjoyable. Obey all posted rules and regulations and respect fellow visitors and the resources of the park.

- Be prepared and bring the proper equipment. Natural areas may possess hazards. Your personal safety and that of your family are your responsibility.
- Alcoholic beverages are prohibited.
- Please camp only in designated areas and try to minimize your impact on the campsite.
- Prevent forest fires by having a fire in proper facilities and properly disposing of hot coals. Do not leave a fire unattended.
- Because uncontrolled pets may chase wildlife or frighten visitors, pets must be physically controlled and attended at all times and on a leash, caged, or crated. Electronic fences and leashes are prohibited. Pets are prohibited in swimming areas.
- Do your part to keep wildlife wild! Enjoy wildlife from a safe distance and do not feed or approach wild animals.

MARSH CREEK STATE PARK

CHESTER COUNTY

- Park Office
- Blue Symbol Means ADA Accessible
- Public Phone
- Modern Restrooms
- Shower House/ Restrooms
- Snack Bar
- Picnicking
- Playground
- Swimming Pool
- Butterfly Meadow
- Boat Rental
- Boat Launch
- Boat Mooring
- Stable / Equestrian Concessions
- Unpaved Road

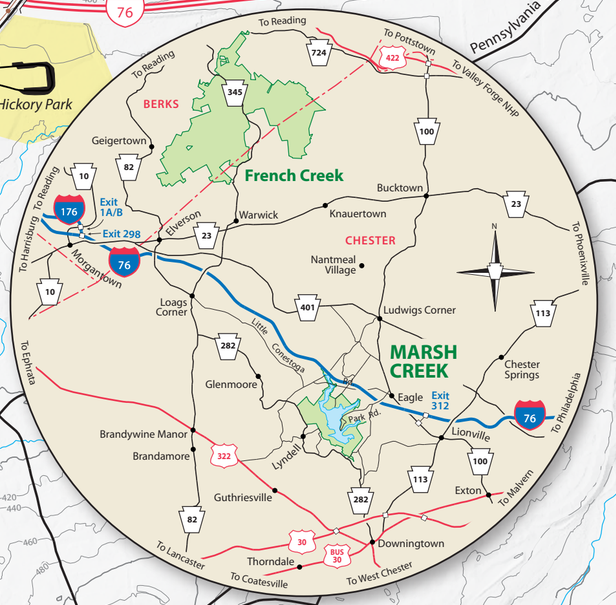
- Parking Paved
- Parking Unpaved
- Parking ADA Accessible
- Parking Horse Trailer
- Gate
- State Park No Hunting
- State Park Hunting
- CONTOURS ARE ON 20 FT. INTERVALS

GPS Coordinates

1. **Park Office**
   40.06793, -75.71925
2. **West Launch**
   40.06732, -75.72004

TRAIL INFORMATION

- Hiking Trail
- Multi-use Trail: Hiking, Mountain Biking, Horseback Riding, Cross-country Skiing
- Mountain Biking Recommended
- Horseback Riding Recommended



Hiking: 18.4 miles

The trails explore a variety of habitats within the park including forest, field, and wetlands. Most trails are accessible from the West Launch parking area. Use extreme caution when hiking in hunting areas during hunting seasons.

Blue Trail: 3.5 miles, blue blazes, more difficult hiking
Mostly wooded, this wide trail is great for horseback riding. It winds through wooded areas of the park where historic ruins still exist and can be explored. It also follows along the East Branch of the Brandywine Creek.

Green Trail: 1 mile, green blazes, more difficult hiking
A great trail for horseback riding, this trail connects to Blue Trail to make for a longer ride.

Lime Loop: 1.83 miles, more difficult hiking
Great for horseback riding or mountain biking, this trail branches off Blue Trail in the northwestern part of the park.

Park Road Trail: 0.5 mile, easiest hiking
Beginning at the boat rental concession, this trail continues to the end of the warm season grass fields. At the park boundary, Upper Uwchlan Township's trail follows alongside Park Road for 0.8 mile to Hickory Park. From there, the trail continues into the village of Eagle where you can get a bite to eat, relax, and enjoy the small businesses the village has to offer. It is approximately 1.5 miles from Marsh Creek State Park's boundary to the intersection of Park Road and the Pottstown Pike in Eagle.

Red Trail: 1.5 miles, red blazes, more difficult hiking
One of two trails located on the east side of the park, this trail can be accessed from any parking lot on the east side. Running along the lake and through the woods, it is a great trail to take when picnicking in the park's day use areas.

White Trail: 4 miles, white blazes, easiest hiking
This trail starts on Little Conestoga Road, but can be more easily accessed at the West Launch parking area. This hike offers lakeside views as well as a hike through the woods and a rolling ramble through agricultural fields and horse barn area. It is a great choice for hikers looking to experience the park's various habitats.

Yellow Trail: 6.07 miles, yellow blazes, most difficult hiking
This trail begins at the Dorlan Mill Road parking area and includes the mountain biking loop trails south and east of the dam. It challenges park visitors while offering some of the best hiking in the park.

Tell us about your hike at:

ExplorePAtrails.com
powered by you



MOUNTAIN BIKING: Mountain biking is permitted on all multi-use trails and recommended on Yellow Trail, which has many loops that can be used to adjust the length of your ride. Use extreme caution when riding in hunting areas during hunting seasons.