A Pennsylvania Recreational Guide for

Sinnemahoning

Sinnemahoning State Park



pennsylvania
DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION
AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Pennsylvania State Parks Mission

The primary purpose of Pennsylvania state parks is to provide opportunities for enjoying healthful outdoor recreation and serve as outdoor classrooms for environmental education. In meeting these purposes, the conservation of the natural, scenic, aesthetic, and historical values of parks should be given first consideration. Stewardship responsibilities should be carried out in a way that protects the natural outdoor experience for the enjoyment of current and future generations.

visitPAparks

2022



Mark and Judy Walters

EXPLORE PENNSYLVANIA WILDS



Pennsylvania Wilds is two million acres of public lands for hiking, biking, fishing, boating, hunting, and exploration in northcentral Pennsylvania. Within the twelve-county region are: 29 state parks, including Sinnemahoning; eight state forest districts (1.3 million acres); 50 state game lands; and Allegheny National Forest (500,000 acres).

Highlights of the area are elk watching, scenic PA 6, Pine Creek Gorge (PA Grand Canyon), the darkest skies in the east at Cherry Springs State Park, and hundreds of miles of backpacking trails, bike paths, and trout fishing streams. For the more adventurous, whitewater rafting through Pine Creek Gorge and hang-gliding at Hyner View State Park offer exciting challenges.

The PA Wilds is also home to an impressive and diverse community of skilled artisans, craftspeople, and producers working across a variety of media. Connecting these unique establishments is the Wilds Cooperative of Pennsylvania. The Artisan Centers in the nearby town of Emporium and Coudersport feature the work of these Wilds Cooperative artisans. www.PAwilds.com

SINNEMAHONING STATE PARK



Mark and Judy Walters

Sinnemahoning State Park is located near the center of the Pennsylvania Wilds' scenic section of the Appalachian Mountains and encompasses 1,910 acres of beautiful scenery and outstanding wildlife habitat. Situated in Cameron and Potter counties, the park is nestled between the green-shouldered ridges of Elk and Susquehannock state forests. The park is long and narrow and includes lands on both sides of First Fork Sinnemahoning Creek, a major tributary to the Sinnemahoning Creek. At the southern end of the park, a 145-acre reservoir created by the George B. Stevenson Dam offers excellent fishing and water recreation opportunities. The abundance of wildlife within the park provides visitors with opportunities to view bald eagles, coyotes, elk, and bobcats. In addition, the park's geographic location is excellent for visitors to explore the other treasures of the Pennsylvania Wilds region.

Directions

GPS DD: Lat. 41.47341 Long. -78.05653

Sinnemahoning State Park is located on PA 872 in Cameron and Potter counties in northcentral Pennsylvania. The park is 13 miles north of the intersection of PA 120 and PA 872 (outside of the village of Sinnemahoning) or 15 miles south of Austin. The Park Office and Wildlife Center is located 0.5 mile south of the northern intersection of PA 872 and Park Road. The northern entrance of the park is about 3 miles north on PA 872.

Reservations

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



PARK OFFICE AND WILDLIFE CENTER



Curt Weinhold

Opened in 2011, this LEED-certified (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) green building provides office space for park administration and an area for park programs and environmental education classes. It also provides information to help orient visitors and offers a centrally-located starting point for exploration of the Pennsylvania Wilds. The center also includes a gallery of interactive, educational exhibits that highlight the history and ecology of the First Fork Valley. A small gift shop is also available during office hours. Call the park for current hours of operation.

LEARN, EXPERIENCE, CONNECT

Sinnemahoning State Park offers year-round environmental education programs. 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.



Wildlife-watching pontoon boat tours of the George B. Stevenson Reservoir are offered on most Sundays from May to September. Kayak and canoe tours of the lake are also offered in the summer months. Outdoor photography workshops focusing on wildlife and landscape photography for the novice photographer are offered each year. Other educational programs allow participants to catch crayfish, tag monarch butterflies, count emerging bats, and observe migratory birds.

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 offered for teachers.

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



Special Events



Women in the Wilds Weekend is offered each summer as a female-focused weekend filled with opportunities to learn new outdoor skills. Programs include mountain biking, archery, kayaking, outdoor photography, GPS, geocaching, fly-fishing, and many others. Participants may choose up to eight different sessions over the three days of the event.

The **First Fork Festival** at Sinnemahoning State Park celebrates the history and culture of the First Fork Sinnemahoning Valley. Held annually on the second Saturday of October, this community-focused, admission-free event features local authors, artists, and artisans showcasing their talents amidst a backdrop of full autumn color.



HISTORY



Thomas Taber III collection

The original inhabitants called this area Sinnemahoning, derived from the Lenni Lenape word "Achsinnimahoni" meaning "stony lick." The first Europeans to enter the valleys of the First Fork were most likely fur trappers, followed by the first few permanent settlers who scratched out a meager living farming the available bottomlands.

The 1800s saw the beginnings of a logging boom in northcentral Pennsylvania; an industry that targeted the abundant old growth pine and hemlock forests. Boom towns sprang up and quickly grew into major centers for commerce and entertainment.

The 1880s ushered in the railroad era for the Sinnemahoning Valley. Lowlands Trail was built upon the railbed of the Goodyear Brothers Railroad, which was constructed as part of the Sinnemahoning Valley Railroad System. It later became part of the Buffalo and Susquehanna Railroad and eventually the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad.

The people who settled along the First Fork were a rugged, self-reliant group of individuals, as attested to by the area's most famous resident, Chauncey "Chance" Logue. He was responsible for planting the maples in 40 Maples Day Use Area. Visitors who count the trees will see that Chance actually planted 48 maples. Chauncey's photo and story can be seen on the display panel near the restrooms in the day use area.

By the turn of the century, most of the timber had been harvested and huge expanses of once-forested hillsides stood bare and subject to erosion and wildfires.

In the years following the Great Depression, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) began putting young men back to work in the valley. From 1933 to 1936, Lushbaugh Camp, S-130-PA, operated near the present-day site of Brooks Run Cabin.

Park Development

Originally known as First Fork Dam, the George B. Stevenson Dam was constructed from 1953-1955 as part of a comprehensive four-dam initiative to control flooding on the West Branch Susquehanna River. The dam was re-named in honor of George B. Stevenson, a Clinton County Senator who promoted the legislation authorizing the project.

In 1983, the administration of the dam under normal water conditions was transferred to the Bureau of State Parks.

The reservoir and surrounding land were developed into Sinnemahoning State Park. During high water events, the dam is regulated in accordance with instructions issued by the Baltimore District U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

WILDLIFE WATCHING



Sinnemahoning offers visitors a variety of wildlife watching experiences. Depending upon the season, visitors could encounter wildlife species big and small throughout the park.

Spring in northern Pennsylvania is a time of renewal. Wildflowers such as spring beauties, hepaticas, and wood lilies blossom on the forest floor. During an early morning walk, visitors may encounter a variety of migratory songbirds returning from as far away as South America to raise their young in the seclusion of the park. Common migrants include scarlet tanagers, ovenbirds, northern parulas (likely in the 40 Maples Picnic Area), and black-billed cuckoos, one of the few birds that may be heard singing at night.

In the summer, a variety of wildlife are often seen along the trails and near the ADA accessible Wildlife Viewing Area at the northern Lowlands Trailhead. This area is ideal habitat for deer, elk, woodcock, migratory songbirds, and monarch butterflies. A spur of the Lowlands Trail near the 40 Maples Day Use Area leads to a viewing blind that overlooks an abandoned beaver pond. Quiet visitors may be able to see great blue herons wading in the pond or painted turtles basking on partially submerged logs. Ospreys, green herons, bobcats, and white-tailed deer also frequent the area. At the northern end of the park, scan the sandy banks of the First Fork for holes indicating the presence of nesting belted kingfishers, a fish-eating bird.

In the fall, the reds, oranges, and yellows of the foliage are revealed throughout the deciduous forests. Watch for small congregations of monarch butterflies in October as they prepare for their long migration to South America.

Winter is a good time to search for signs of wildlife. Look for strips of bark removed from trees indicating the presence of elk. Tracks from many animals including coyote and bobcat can be seen in the snow.

Elk Viewing

Sinnemahoning State Park is home to a growing elk herd. Elk are mainly grazers preferring to feed on non-woody vegetation, legumes, and grasses, but will browse on trees and shrubs when preferred vegetation is not available. Two areas near the Wildlife Viewing Area have herbaceous favorites including clover and trefoil which make it a great location to view elk. Also, look for elk near the Wildlife Viewing Blind, 40 Maples Picnic Area, the breast of the dam, and the Park Office and Wildlife Center.

Summer is a time of growth, providing lush vegetation for elk to nourish their young. Look for spotted elk calves along the Lowlands Trail, but remember to keep your distance from these wild animals for your safety and theirs.

Fall is the rut, or breeding season, for elk. Watch for a herd of cows being guarded by a dominant bull. Listen for the bugle and belly grunts of a bull as he defends his harem from other intruding bulls. During rut, wild elk can be territorial and dangerous. Please stay on trails or use designated viewing areas.

Nesting Eagles

Resident nesting pairs of eagles can often be seen year round in the park. In late winter, bald eagles usually build and prepare their nests for the upcoming season. Bald eagles lay one to three eggs which will hatch in the middle of April. With a good pair of binoculars and some patience, a casual observer can witness a spectacular display of eagle behavior as the eaglets fledge and leave the nest. In the fall, many bald eagles rest and feed to prepare for their annual migration for winter.

Wildlife Watching Tips

When watching wildlife, keep in mind the following tips to enhance the quality of your viewing experience.

Fade into the background:
- Wear dull colors that will not contrast with your surroundings.
- Walk softly and crouch behind trees or rocks to blend in and break up your outline.

Think like an animal:
- Imagine how the animal you are seeking spends its day. Check field guides to find out about preferred habits.
- As a rule, the border between two habitats is a good place to see residents from both places.
- Dusk and dawn are usually the best times of day for viewing.
- Consider the weather. For instance, many animals emerge to feed after a rain.



B. Schiffhauer

Let animals be themselves:
- Resist the temptation to 'save' young animals. The mother is usually watching from a safe distance.
- Give nests a wide berth. Your visit may lead predators to the nest.
- Let animals eat their natural foods. Feeding wildlife harms the digestive systems of wild animals and get animals hooked on handouts.

Viewing etiquette:
- Leave pets at home.
- Observe, photograph, and film wildlife from a safe distance.
- If an animal shows stress, move away.
- Stay on trails to lessen impact.
- Treat others courteously.
- Report inappropriate behavior to the authorities.



NATURAL RESOURCES



From a birds-eye view, Sinnemahoning State Park sits in a deep, narrow valley carved out of a high plateau. Glacial melt massively eroded layers of sandstone and shale, creating the deep valleys of this area. For a spectacular view, drive to the top of Brooks Run Road and go right onto Ridge Road to the Logue Run Vista. Notice the uniform, flat-topped hills that rise 2,300 feet above sea level.

The deep valleys contrast with the heavily forested terrain of the mountains. The farm fields and riparian habitats of Sinnemahoning State Park are part of a rich tapestry that supports a variety of plants and animals.

NEARBY ATTRACTIONS

Information on nearby attractions is available from:
Potter-Tioga Visitors Bureau.
888-846-4228. www.visitpottertioga.org
Great Outdoors Visitors Bureau.
814-849-5197. www.visitpago.com

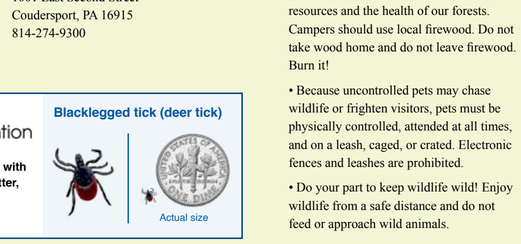
The 200,000-acre **Elk State Forest** provides opportunities for hiking, camping, hunting, fishing, snowmobiling, and other recreational activities. 814-486-3353

The 262,000-acre **Susquehannock State Forest** abuts the northern portion of Sinnemahoning State Park. It provides opportunities for hiking, primitive camping, fishing, boating, hunting, and other recreational activities. 814-274-3600

Bucktail State Park Natural Area consists of a beautiful 75-mile scenic drive along PA 120 from Emporium to Lock Haven. This route stretches through a narrow valley called the Bucktail Trail after the famous American Civil War regiment of Woodsmen, the Bucktails or Bucktail Rangers. 814-486-3365

Cherry Springs State Park, an International Dark Sky Park, boasts some of the darkest night skies in the northeastern United States. The park provides an astronomy field, camping, special facilities, and education programs for astronomers and the general public. 814-435-5010

Located six miles north of Emporium on PA 155, **Sizerville State Park** is surrounded by Elk State Forest and near the largest blocks of state forest in the commonwealth. Sizerville offers a swimming pool and many opportunities for outdoor recreation, providing a good base to explore the nearby public lands. 814-486-5605



The 1,793-acre **Kettle Creek State Park** is located in western Clinton County. The park is in a valley surrounded by mountainous terrain and wilderness. Recreational activities include hiking, mountain biking, picnicking, boating, fishing, hunting, and camping. 570-923-6004

The **Elk Scenic Drive** outlines a 127-mile corridor passing through Clinton, Clearfield, Cameron, and Elk counties. The drive takes travelers through the Pennsylvania elk range and offers views of some of the most beautiful areas of the Pennsylvania Wilds, including three state forests, three state game lands, four state parks, and the very popular Elk Country Visitor Center. Visitors are provided with abundant opportunities for wildlife viewing and photography. 800-577-2029. www.PAwilds.com

The **Quehanna Wild Area** is a 48,000-acre almost circular patch of small, secondary-growth, mixed hardwood forest situated on a plateau in the most unpopulated area of the state. Once a site for jet engine and nuclear research, this area was returned to the commonwealth in 1966. Now the largest state forest wild area, the Quehanna Wild Area is home to diverse wildlife including elk, deer, and bears, and is designated an Important Bird Area. More information on the Quehanna Wild Area and the 75-mile Quehanna Trail can be found through Elk State Forest. 814-486-3353

The **Austin Dam Memorial Park** contains the ruins of a broken dam and destroyed buildings that are still visible just north of Austin, approximately 18 miles north of Sinnemahoning State Park on PA 872. On September 30, 1911, the Bayless Pulp and Paper Company Dam on Freeman Run gave way, releasing millions of gallons of water through the town of Austin, killing 78 people and destroying the towns of Austin and Costello. The disaster was reported as far away as San Francisco and inspired the 1913 legislation to control dam construction in Pennsylvania. www.AustinDam.net

INFORMATION AND RESERVATIONS

Sinnemahoning State Park
4843 Park Road
Austin, PA 16720
814-647-8401
SinnemahoningSP@pa.gov

An Equal Opportunity Employer
www.dcnr.pa.gov/StateParks

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

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.

There is no cell phone service in the immediate area. Phones for local calls are located at the Park Office and Wildlife Center and in the campground.

NEAREST HOSPITAL
UPMC Cole
1001 East Second Street
Coudersport, PA 16915
814-274-9300

CDC Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Prevent tick bites by wearing clothing treated with tick repellent. Avoid areas with brush, leaf litter, or tall grass. Stay on the trail.

https://www.cdc.gov/ticks

Blacklegged tick (deer tick)

Actual size

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. You are responsible for you and your family's safety.
- Alcoholic beverages are prohibited.
- Please camp only in designated areas and try to minimize your impact on the campsite.
- Firewood Advisory: Firewood may contain non-native insects and plant diseases. Bringing firewood into the park from other areas may accidentally spread pest insects and diseases that threaten park resources and the health of our forests. Campers should use local firewood. Do not take wood home and do not leave firewood. Burn it!
- Because uncontrolled pets may chase wildlife or frighten visitors, pets must be physically controlled, attended at all times, and on a leash, caged, or crated. Electronic fences and leashes are prohibited.
- Do your part to keep wildlife wild! Enjoy wildlife from a safe distance and do not feed or approach wild animals.

RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Spend the Day



BOATING: electric motors only
A boat launch in the Lake Day Use Area is popular with electric boats, kayaks, and canoes. A mooring area near the boat launch has spaces available for rent from April to October, and several courtesy spaces are reserved for overnight guests. A mooring permit is required and may be obtained at the park office.

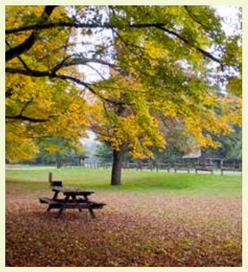
Motorboats must display a boat registration from any state. Non-powered boats must display one of the following: boat registration from any state; launch permit or mooring permit from Pennsylvania State Parks, available at most state park offices; launch use permit from the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat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

FISHING: The 145-acre George B. Stevenson Reservoir has fishing for coldwater and warmwater species, including brook, rainbow, and brown trout, smallmouth and largemouth bass, sunfish, bluegill, perch, pickerel, crappie, and catfish. An ADA accessible fishing pier is located near the boat launch. Throughout the park, creeks also provide good angling and some streams in the park contain native brook trout.



Excellent fishing can be found on First Fork Sinnemahoning Creek, downstream from the mouth of Schoolhouse Run for 3.9 miles. This section is designated as a delayed harvest, artificial lures only special regulation area. Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission regulations and laws apply.

PICNICKING: The park contains two main picnic areas. The Lake Day Use Area at the George B. Stevenson Reservoir is located in an open grassy area and includes picnic tables and charcoal grills. In addition, a pavilion with an adjoining checkers/chess table and grill is located at the Eagle Watch Area directly above the boat launch.



The 40 Maples Day Use Area includes two ADA accessible pavilions, along with numerous picnic tables scattered throughout the area. It also contains a volleyball net, horseshoe pit, and a basketball half-court. Electricity is not available in this area.

Pavilions can be reserved up to 11 months in advance and must be reserved at least two days in advance. Unreserved pavilions are free on a first-come, first-served basis.



HIKING: 6 miles

Lowlands Trail: 5 miles, no blazes, easiest hiking
The Lowlands Trail follows the course of the First Fork, passing through open fields, shrubby riparian zones, and mature forests. This scenic trail was originally part of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad bed. Educational panels along the way provide insights into the wildlife and ecology of the park. This trail allows access to the Wildlife Viewing Area at the northern end of the park and the Viewing Blind near 40 Maples.

Red Spruce Trail: 1 mile, yellow blazes, more difficult
Connecting the campground to the 40 Maples Day Use Area, this shady trail skirts a wetland area and passes under the dense canopy of a mature, mixed hardwood forest.

BICYCLING: The 5-mile Lowlands Trail provides opportunities to view wildlife while traveling on the scenic rail trail. Bicycling is also permitted on all park roads.



HUNTING AND FIREARMS: About 1400 acres of the park are open to hunting, trapping, and the training of dogs during the established seasons. Common game species are deer, grouse, squirrel, bear, turkey, and waterfowl.

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.

Stay the Night

CAMPING: The 35-site campground is one mile south of the Park Office and Wildlife Center along PA 872 and is open from the mid-April to mid-December. The camping area features a sanitary dump station and a modern restroom with showers. The restroom and some campsites are ADA accessible. Electric hookups are available at most sites, which are sized to accommodate camping equipment from tents to large recreational vehicles. A picnic table, lantern hook, and campfire ring are provided at each site. Pets are permitted on designated sites. Campsites can be reserved up to 11 months in advance and up to noon on the day of arrival. The centrally-located campground amphitheater offers educational programs throughout the summer season.

BROOKS RUN CABIN: The modern cabin is nestled in a hemlock grove along Brooks Run at the southern end of the park. The four-bedroom cabin accommodates twelve people and includes an updated, modern kitchen and a living room with a stone fireplace. Linens, washcloths, towels, cleaning supplies, and food are not supplied. A secluded patio and campfire area provides convenient space for outdoor cooking and entertaining. This popular cabin can be reserved up to 11 months in advance and must be reserved at least two days in advance. It is available by the week during the summer peak season and for a minimum of two days during the non-peak season.



Enjoy the Winter



SNOWMOBILING: Within the park, 1.5 miles of joint-use road and 5 miles of Lowlands Trail may be traveled by snowmobile. The route is clearly marked by signs and orange blaze markers. Current snow depths and conditions are posted on the state parks website.

The park route joins the trails of Elk State Forest at Brooks Run Road, totaling 25 miles of trail system. Most state forest trails are groomed for snowmobiling.

Snowmobiles may be operated on designated trails and roads from the day following the last day of deer season in December until April 1, weather permitting. Snowmobiles are prohibited from operating on frozen water surfaces and shorelines. All snowmobiles must be registered.

ICE FISHING: Conditions permitting, all areas of the lake are open for ice fishing except within 50 feet of the trash boom by the dam. **Ice thickness is not monitored.** For your safety, make sure ice is at least 4" thick for a single angler and 7" thick for a small group. Extreme caution must be taken during ice related activities. Dangerous ice conditions like unsafe or weak ice or air pockets may exist due to rapidly rising or falling lake levels. Always carry safety equipment.



GEORGE B. STEVENSON DAM

- Rolled, earth-fill structure 1,918 feet long and 166 feet high
- Top width of 30 feet and a maximum width of 940 feet at the base
- A 16-foot diameter reinforced concrete tunnel carries the flow of the creek through the right (west) abutment of the dam
- The 211-foot-high reinforced concrete control tower houses the two, 37-ton sluice gates and operating equipment
- The flood control storage of the reservoir is equal to 5.85 inches of runoff from the 243-square-mile drainage area above the dam

GPS DD: Lat. 41.40685 Long. -78.02129



Photograph by Gannett and Fleming Inc.

SINNEMAHONING STATE PARK

