



Kiski - Conemaugh Water Trail

Upper Section

Johnstown-to-Blairsville

River Miles: 40

Water trails are recreational corridors 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 resources stewardship. The Kiski-Conemaugh is located in southwestern Pennsylvania, and flows along the borders of Somerset, Cambria, Westmoreland, Indiana, and Armstrong Counties into the Allegheny River north of Pittsburgh. This section of a two-map guide focuses on the river from Johnstown to Blairsville.

Updated 2023

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.



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DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION
AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Colcom Foundation

COMMITTED TO A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE



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pennsylvania environmental council



Pittsburgh-To-Harrisburg Main Line Canal

GREENWAY™

This project was supported in part by a grant from the Colcom Foundation, administered by Kiski Watershed Association.

This project was financed in part by a grant from the Community Conservation Partnerships Program Environmental Stewardship fund, under the administration of the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Bureau of Recreation and Conservation.

FLOATING THE CONEMAUGH RIVER

The headwaters of the Conemaugh originate at around 3,000 feet above sea level and the course of the river drops to 957 feet above sea level at the mouth of the Kiskiminetas. Like many rivers, the ability to paddle the Conemaugh varies throughout the year. Peak water flow occurs from February through May. In July and August, the river may be below desired levels and some sections may be quite rocky. Float speed is approximately 2 to 3 miles per hour — but a good rain will affect float speed and the ability to paddle any section.

Stream flow can change rapidly creating potentially unsafe conditions. Check weather, precipitation, and local outfitters to plan accordingly. For current water levels, do a search for “Ferndale USGS Gauge” or “Seward USFS Gauge” on the Internet. The suggested minimum at Ferndale is 300 cfs and at Seward it is 400 cfs.



cr: Watersmith Guild



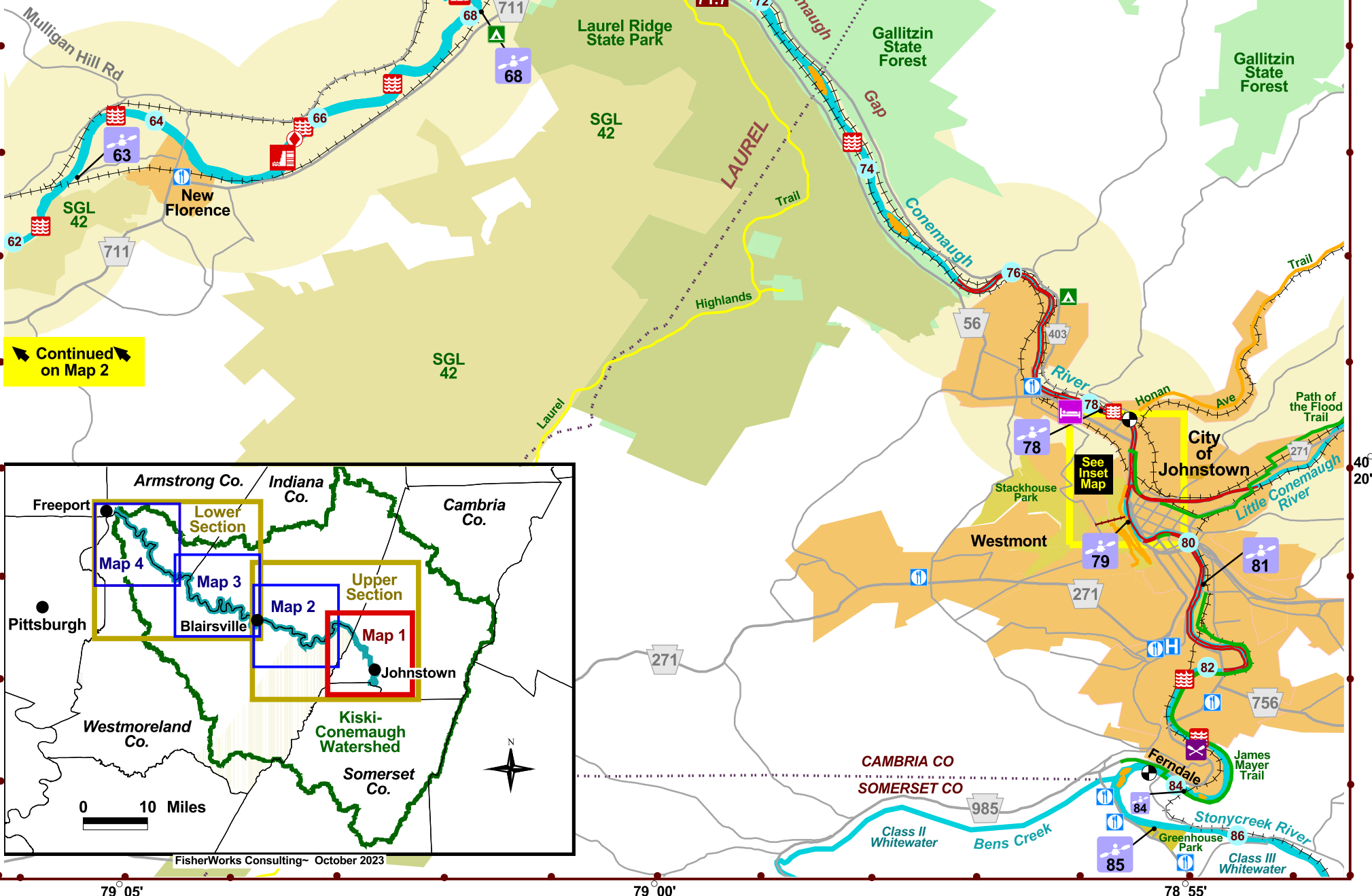
cr: Watersmith Guild



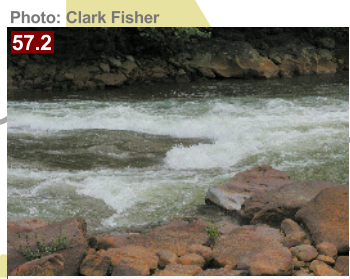
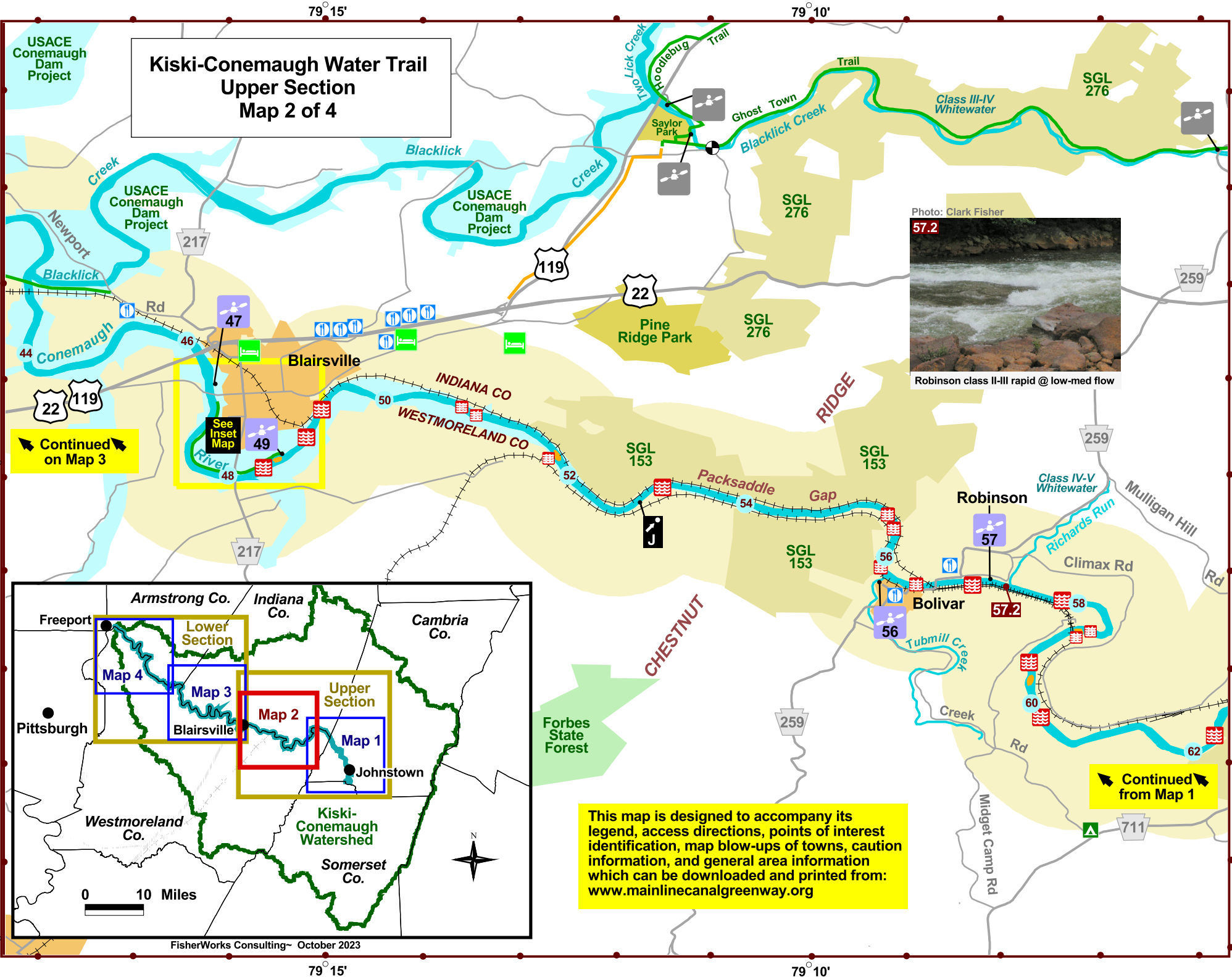
The Kiski-Conemaugh Rivers are an important part of the Pittsburgh-to-Harrisburg Main Line Canal Greenway™, a 320 mile corridor of heritage sites, hub communities and outdoor recreation opportunities that is “Making New Connections Between Old Neighbors™.” The Greenway follows the route of the historic canal system, and you will find remnants of this little-known transportation corridor during your float.

This map is designed to accompany its legend, access directions, points of interest identification, map blow-ups of towns, caution information, and general area information which can be downloaded and printed from: www.mainlinecanalgreenway.org

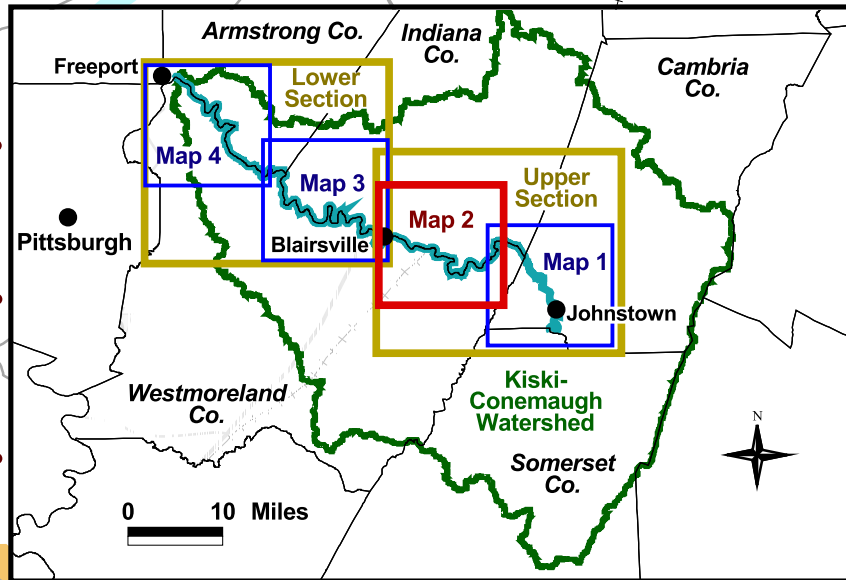
Kiski-Conemaugh Water Trail Upper Section Map 1 of 4



Kiski-Conemaugh Water Trail Upper Section Map 2 of 4



Robinson class II-III rapid @ low-med flow



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Kiski-Conemaugh River Water Trail Access Sites


Upper Section - Maps 1 & 2

Access identification number denotes the approximate river mile from the mouth of the Kiskiminetas River at Freeport


 85	Greenhouse Park Surfaced Ramp - River Left	Lat 40 16 38 Lon 78 55 21	From US 219 take Davidsville exit onto PA 403 North approx 4 miles to Greenhouse Park (on the R one half mile past the second red light).
 84	Riverside Surfaced Ramp - River Right	Lat 40 16 58 Lon 78 55 01	From US 219 take Davidsville exit onto PA 403 North approx 4.8 mi to T intersection red light. Turn R continuing on PA 403. Turn R at next red light onto Eisenhower Blvd. Go over Stonycreek River and immediately turn L onto Michigan Ave 0.3 mi to access.
 81	Baumer St. River Wall Surfaced Ramp - River Right	Lat 40 18 58 Lon 78 54 50	Hornerstown section of Johnstown. From the bottom of the Johnstown Inclined Plane, take PA Rt 403 South one mile to red light at bottom of small hill. Veer L onto Hickory St. bridge over Stonycreek River. Turn L at end of bridge onto Baumer St. 0.1 mile to end. Gated ramp on your left.
 79	Johnstown Inclined Plane Surfaced Ramp - River Right	Lat 40 19 34 Lon 78 55 31	Johns St. PA Rt 56 / PA Rt 403 downtown Johnstown. Gated ramp.
 78	Power St. River Wall Surfaced Ramp - River Left	Lat 40 20 32 Lon 78 55 46	Cambria City section of Johnstown. From the bottom of the Johnstown Inclined Plane, take PA Rt 56 West / PA Rt 403 South 1.2 miles. Turn R onto 6th Ave. 0.1 mile to end / intersection with Power St. Gated Ramp.
 70	Seward - Pine St Path - River Left	Lat 40 25 11 Lon 79 01 08	From the bottom of the Johnstown Inclined Plane, take PA Rt 56 West 9.3 miles to Seward. Cross the bridge over the railroad tracks then make first R onto Walnut St. Proceed 0.2 miles on Walnut St. then turn L onto Pine St. 0.2 miles to end at river.
 68	Seward - 5th St Path - River Left	Lat 40 24 30 Lon 79 01 47	From US 22 take PA 56 East ~3 miles, turn R onto 5th St in Seward 0.2 miles past the bridge over Conemaugh River. Take 5th St 0.6 miles to access. Camping permitted.
 63	New Florence Primitive - River Left	Lat 40 22 44 Lon 79 05 29	From US 30 – Take PA 711 North. In New Florence, at Uni-Mart, go straight at intersection off of 711 (711 goes R). Turn L at 9th St. Paved road turns to dirt road .8 mi to the river. Put in next to RR bridge.
 57	Robinson Primitive - River Right	Lat 40 23 55 Lon 79 08 05	From US 22– Take PA 259 South toward Bolivar. About a half-mile before Bolivar, turn L onto Caroline Street in Robinson. Proceed about a half-mile and a park will be on R next to Community Center.
 56	Bolivar Ball Field Path near Tubmill Run mouth	Lat 40 23 54 Lon 79 09 15	From US 30 - Take PA 259 North for approx 15 miles to Bolivar. Turn L onto 2nd St at bend in PA 259 and follow to end of road at the ball field. Access is on Tubmill Run near the confluence with the Conemaugh River.
 49	Park/Athletic Fields Primitive - River Right	Lat 40 25 13 Lon 79 15 29	From US 22 - Take PA 217 exit (Blairsville). Follow PA 217 South (which becomes Walnut St.) into Blairsville. Turn L onto Johnson Ave., follow through parking area and turn R, then L into Wyotech Park. Access is at the end of the Park road, past the ballfields.
 47	Bairdstown Bridge Primitive - River Right	Lat 40 25 52 Lon 79 16 11	From US 22 - Take PA 217 exit (Blairsville). Follow PA 217 South (which becomes Walnut St.) into Blairsville. Turn R at the National Guard Armory (looks like a castle) next to the library. Go straight until it ends behind the Lutheran Church. Parking area is to the R.


Kiski-Conemaugh River Water Trail Upper Section


Map Legend, Caution Information, Points of Interest and General Information


 **85** Carry-In Canoe Access Site (ID Number is the Approximate River Mile - See Chart for Directions)


PFBC Access Sites Require PA Fish&Boat Comm. Launch Permit


 Canoe Livery / Outfitter (Contact for Access)


 USACE Paved River Walls in City of Johnstown


 **57.2** Class II-III Rapid


 Riffles / Waves


 Caution


 In-Stream River-Wide Dam. Danger. Avoid.


 **64** Mileage from Kiskiminetas River Mouth (Two-Mile Intervals)


 USGS Stream Flow Gauge Station (Internet Accessible)


 Visitor Information - Visit Johnstown


 Camp Sites - with Restrooms


 Inns and Bed & Breakfasts


 Hotels and Motels


 Restaurants


 Point of Interest


 Hospital


 Public Library - Identification Required for Internet Access


 Rail Trail


 Laurel Highlands Trail


 Other Trails


 County Boundary


 River Island


 City or Borough


 State Park

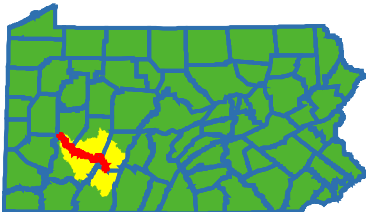
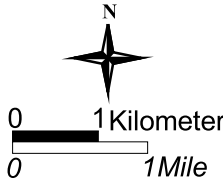
 State Forest

 **SGL** State Game Land

 Local Park

 U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

 Pittsburgh-to-Harrisburg Main Line Canal Greenway™

Points of Interest Upper Section

Johnstown

- A Spider Man / Doctor Strange Mural
- B Johnstown Post Office
- C Johnstown City Office Building
- D Johnstown Inclined Plane
- E Inclined Plane Visitor Cen/Exhibits/Observation Platform
- F Johnstown Flood Museum
- G Old Stone Bridge
- H BottleWorks Ethnic Arts Center
- I Johnstown Heritage Discovery Center

Packsaddle Gap

- J Historic Canal Lock #5

Blairsville

- K Blairsville Borough Building / Police
- L Blairsville Underground Rail Road Museum
- M Blairsville Community Recreation Center
- N Historical Society of the Blairsville Area & Museum
- O Blairsville Post Office
- P Blairsville Armory
- Q Blairsville Veterans Memorial Bridge Ampitheater



Caution Information



There are two class II - III rapids (miles 71.7 and 57.2) that can be navigated by scouting ahead. Several other riffles are identified on the map that can be navigated with minimal paddling experience. Avoid the upstream side of bridge abutments. Extra caution should be taken within the flood control walls between miles 82 and 75.5.

Monthly Average Information for Seward, PA

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Avg. High(F)	37°	41°	51°	64°	74°	83°	87°	85°	77°	65°	53°	42°
Avg. Low(F)	21°	23°	30°	39°	49°	57°	61°	59°	53°	41°	34°	25°
Avg. Precip.(in)	3.8	3.4	3.9	3.8	4.3	4.9	5.1	4.1	4.1	3.3	3.7	3.3
Sunrise(AM)	7:41	7:13	7:32	6:42	6:03	5:49	6:02	6:30	7:00	7:30	7:05	7:35
Sunset(PM)	5:17	5:54	7:26	7:58	8:28	8:51	8:49	8:18	7:30	6:41	5:03	4:54
Gauge(CFS)	1,500	1,830	2,800	2,360	1,540	1,030	644	492	512	562	887	1,310

(Sunrise and Sunset are the 15th of each month - including daylight savings time)

YOU CAN BE PART OF A SUCCESS STORY

As you enjoy the scenic and recreational amenities of the Kiski and Conemaugh Rivers, keep in mind that decades of work by environmental conservationists made that possible. Once among the Commonwealth's most polluted, some paddlers may remember when not that long ago, these rivers literally ran orange from the impact of Abandoned Mine Drainage.

COMMUNITY SHIFT

In 2017, the Conemaugh Valley Conservancy published a State of the Kiski-Conemaugh Watershed Report that summarized exactly how much these rivers have progressed since the 1999 River Conservation Plan. Most aquatic life needs a pH between 5 and 8 to survive. In 1993 the Conemaugh River in Blairsville had a pH of 4.8, which is comparable to beer. In 2017 that site had a pH of 7.8. A 1997 fish survey documented 14 species of fish, mostly pollution-tolerant species. A 2015 survey found 16 species, but the survey was dominated by pollution-sensitive fish like banded darter and logperch! While the basin's streams and rivers have changed from net acidic to net alkaline – fish poor to fish rich – much work remains. Treatment systems built in the 1990s risk failing and must be maintained, erosion and sedimentation is replacing Abandoned Mine Drainage as primary source of pollution, combined sewer overflows dump untreated waste water into the rivers.

Meanwhile watershed associations – true heroes of western PA – struggle to attract volunteers and leaders. Often with 30+ year legacies, these and other conservation groups are STILL doing fantastic work to enhance our quality of life. Find them. Celebrate them. Support them.

To learn more about stewardship organizations and find Community Shift: The State of the Kiski-Conemaugh Watershed Report, visit: conemaughvalleyconservancy.org.

The Stonycreek-Conemaugh River Improvement Project was founded in 1991 to abate Abandoned Mine Drainage (AMD) in the Stonycreek and Little Conemaugh watersheds. SCRIP has coordinated the installation of millions of dollars worth of successful AMD abatement projects, restoring aquatic life and fisheries on many miles of previously AMD impacted waters. To learn more visit: www.scrippa.org.

FLORA AND FAUNA

- Fair numbers of smallmouth and largemouth bass, yellow perch and sunfish can be found, along with local pockets of trout where clean, stocked streams meet the main stem.
- A mosaic of eastern hardwoods – black cherry, oak, maple, hemlock and sycamore as well as mountain laurel and rhododendron are all prevalent.
- Ospreys and bald eagles, black bears, deer, wild turkeys, muskrats, blue herons, grouse, wood ducks, mallards and Canada geese.



Blue heron, cr: Steve Smith



Otter, cr: Thomas Serfass

NATURAL AND HISTORIC FEATURES

- 6 miles of concrete flood control walls.
- Johnstown Inclined Plane, est 1891, world's steepest vehicular incline.
- Conemaugh River Bridge - stone arch bridge blocked debris during 1889 flood, which caught fire and burned for days.
- 1,560 feet deep Conemaugh Gorge – the third deepest river gorge in PA.
- Charles L. Lewis Natural Area, part of Gallitzin State Forest.
- Laurel Ridge State Park abuts State Game Lands 42 and includes the northern terminus of the 70-mile Laurel Highlands Hiking Trail near Seward.
- 1,308 feet deep Packsaddle Gap is formed where the river cuts through Chestnut Ridge and features extraordinary PA Canal remnants – Lock #5 and 2 miles of revetment wall. Much of Packsaddle is in State Game Lands 153.

RECREATION

For more on recreation and heritage in the corridor, see our Kiski-Conemaugh Water Trail Interactive Web Maps at: <http://mainlinecanalgreenway.org/experiencing-the-greenway/traveling-by-boat/>.

For more on the area's regional bike trail system go to: <http://www.transallegHENYtrails.com/>.

BOATING AND PADDLING SAFETY TIPS

IN CASE OF EMERGENCY: DIAL 911

- 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 boating.
- 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 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 waterway section 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 secure.
- Never tie a rope to yourself or to another boater, especially a child.
- If you collide with an obstruction in a kayak, lean toward it. This will usually prevent 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.

PRIVATE LAND

Plan and make stops on shorelines open to the public. Respect the privacy and rights of landowners by obtaining permission before entering any privately owned land. Avoid loud behavior and making loud noises. Remember that sound carries across water much more clearly than on land. Share the same courtesy that you would want others to provide. A friendly wave or quiet greeting is always welcome.



Apollo storm drain art, cr: Apollo Ridge Education Foundation

PA BOATING REGULATIONS

- One wearable, Coast Guard-approved life jacket (personal flotation device or PFD) in serviceable condition and of the appropriate size is required for each person in your boat.
- 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.
- Unpowered boats 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.fishandboat.com.
- 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.fishandboat.com.

STEWARDSHIP

Care for the resources along the Kiski-Conemaugh Water Trail by respecting wildlife, nature and other people. "Leave No Trace," a national outdoor ethics program, provides guidelines to minimize your impact. Visit www.lnt.org.

Leave no trace for camping and day use:

- Plan and prepare.
- Travel and camp on durable surfaces.
- Dispose of waste properly.
- Leave what you find.
- Minimize campfires.
- Respect wildlife.
- Be considerate of other visitors.

OUTFITTERS, CAMPING AND VISITOR INFORMATION

Coal Tubin'

Johnstown - (814) 254-4393
<https://www.facebook.com/CoalTubin/>

Visit Johnstown

(814) 536-7993
www.visitjohnstownpa.com

Quemahoning Family Recreation Area

Hollsopple - (814) 233-9512
www.quefamilyrec.com

The Alleghenies

(800) 458-3433
www.thealleghenies.com

GO Laurel Highlands

(724) 238-5661
www.golaurelhighlands.com

Cernic's Campground

Johnstown - (814) 242-8187

Indiana County Tourist Bureau

(724) 463-7505
www.visitindianacountypa.org



pennsylvania
 FISH & BOAT COMMISSION

JOHNSTOWN (RIVER MILES 84-78)

Johnstown's storied past is informing its promising future. Grass-roots community revitalization and visionary leadership are banking on Johnstown's resilience to create an exhilarating new reality.

Consider a few details assembled by the Cambria County Regional Chamber of Commerce, and you'll know what all the fuss is about. Within short driving distance of Johnstown there are 323 miles of biking on 17 rail-trails, 100s of miles of flat water canoeing and kayaking, 15 class 3 waterways for 73 miles of whitewater paddling, 250 miles of hiking on 48 trails, 41 mountain biking trails, 1,800 miles of trout fishing, 4 ski resorts plus 99 miles of Nordic skiing, 14 state parks and 4 National Parks!

Johnstown is emerging as a mecca for outdoor recreation enthusiasts and an affordable place to live with an emerging economy. Most workers have an easy commute, averaging 23 minutes. There is a talented skilled labor pool and more than 45,000 college-educated employees, 11 nearby universities and colleges, close to 5,000 enterprises. Locals and visitors enjoy 21 museums and cultural centers, 67 festivals, 30 craft beer hotspots, and 28 diverse music venues.

Surprised? Johnstown's rich history makes the city uniquely buoyant. In the 1700s, Johnstown was the junction for moving goods from the Juniata River system to the Ohio River system, and all points west.



Johnstown at night from Inclined Plane, cr: Visit Johnstown

The Conemaugh River was declared a public highway in the 1790s. In the mid-19th century, mills used the river as a slag dump. Streams were dammed to feed steel mills. The width of the river was cut in half, and a natural erosion buffer was lost as trees were shorn from the hillsides. But Johnstown always fights back - coming out of an era of 19th century industrial environmental degradation, surviving 3 devastating floods in 1889, 1936, and 1977, and poised to establish a new, "Mountain Town" identity to follow the steel era.

The stubborn spirit of environmental stewards brought the rivers back to life, and this hardy community with it. Local citizens engaged in this transformation to unite Johnstown's past and future, driving ideas into action with vision and hard-work to create a new reality.

BLAIRSVILLE (RIVER MILES 50-46)

Founded in 1818 as a stagecoach town, much about Blairsville can be understood through the evolution of transportation systems: stagecoach, river, canal, rail, auto and today, bike and pedestrian travel. Although the railroad industry made the primary mark on the town, the river literally shaped Blairsville.

Blairsville sits in the backwaters of the Conemaugh Dam, which was constructed in 1949, along with several other regional dams designed to protect downstream communities from repeated flooding. When the dam's reservoir is full, the entire flood area can be backed up for 21 miles and all elevations up to 975 feet would be under water. The properties near the river, including the now-ghost communities of Cokeville and Bairdstown, are managed by the Army Corps of Engineers.

Today Blairsville embraces its river heritage with two river access points, its Blairsville Riverfront Trail, and annual river events. The town hosts both and Elks and Eagles Clubs. Its charming Diamond at Market and Spring Streets, features a reconstructed bandstand, originally built in 1901. The community is a hub between the **West Penn and Hoodlebug/Ghost Town Trails**.



Blairsville Riverfront Trail

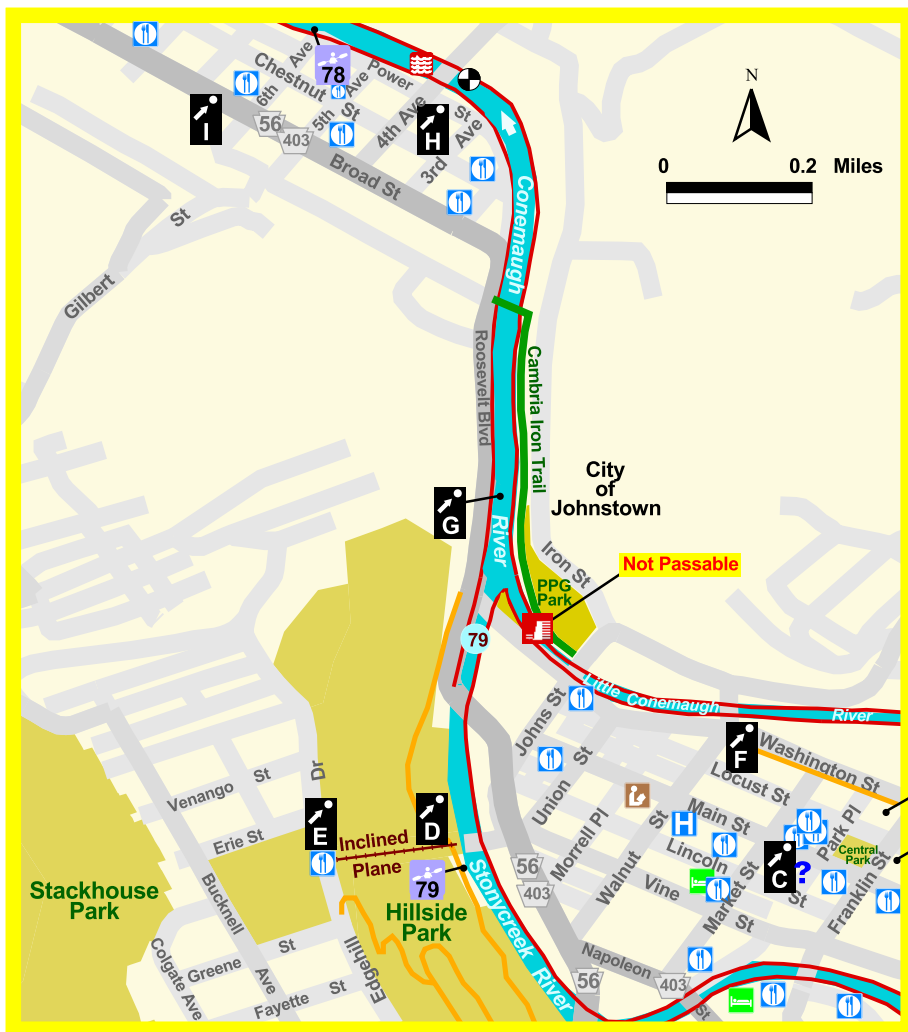


Packsaddle Gap



Knotweed Festival in Blairsville

City of Johnstown



Kiski-Conemaugh River Water Trail

Upper Section
Town Blow-Ups
(See Legend for Icons
and Points of Interest
Identification)

Blairsville

