



# Kiski - Conemaugh Water Trail

*Upper Section*

*Johnstown-to-Blairsville*

River Miles: 40

## Map & Guide

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. Explore this unique Pennsylvania water trail. This section of a two-map guide focuses on the river from Johnstown to Blairsville.

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.



**pennsylvania**  
DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION  
AND NATURAL RESOURCES



This project was supported in part by a grant from the Colcom Foundation.

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.

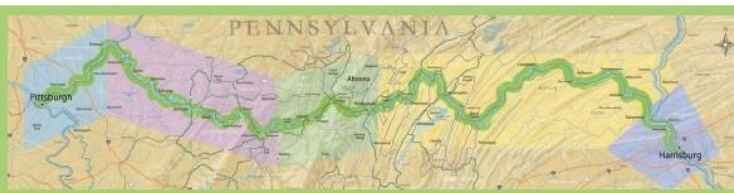
### FLOATING THE CONEMAUGH RIVER

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.

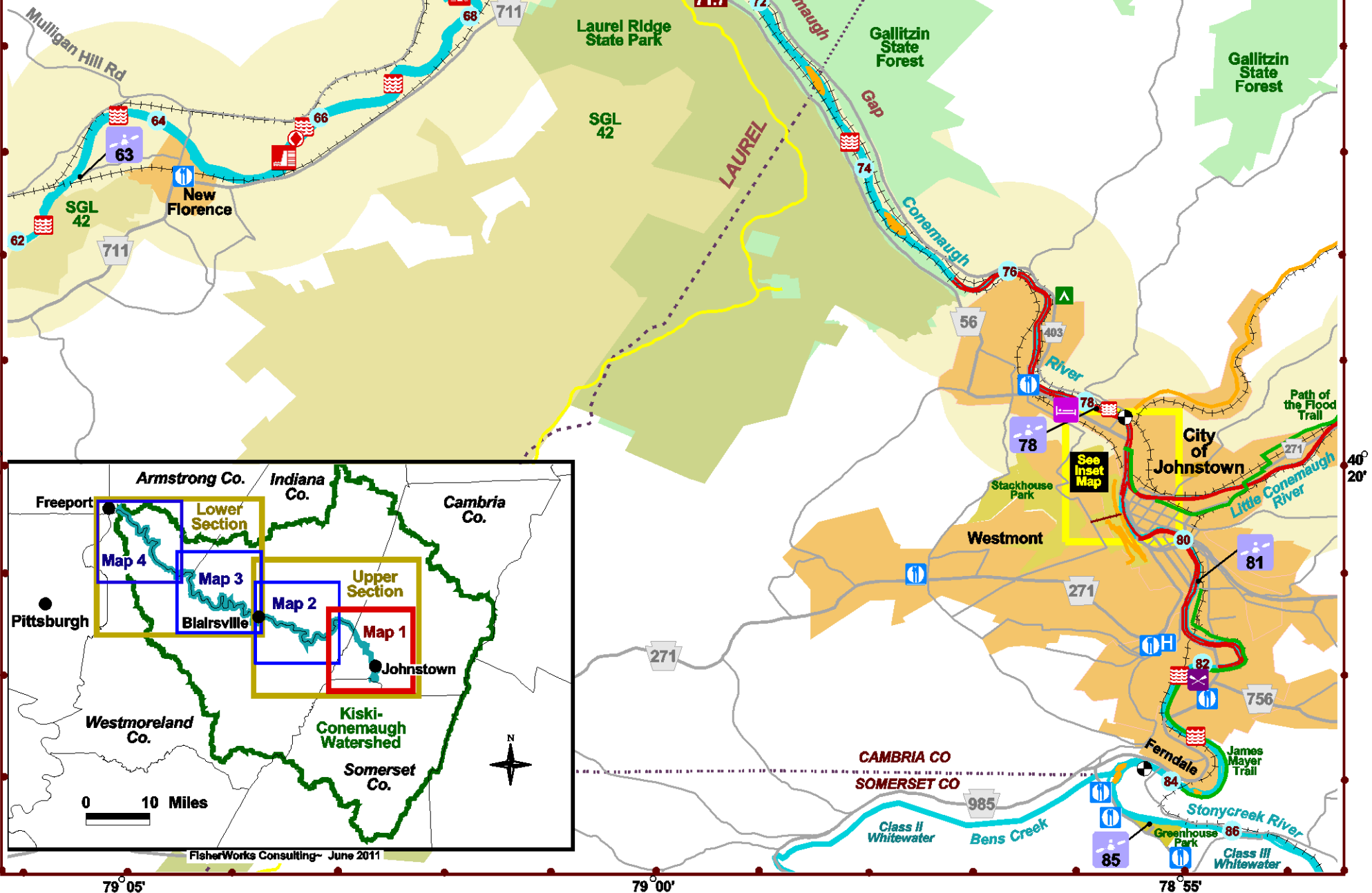
Stream flow can change rapidly creating potentially unsafe conditions. Check weather, precipitation, and local outfitters to plan accordingly. For current water levels, do a search for "Ferndale USGS Gauge" or "Seward USGS Gauge" on the internet. The suggested minimum at Ferndale is 300 cfs and at Seward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

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](http://www.mainlinecanalgreenway.org)

# Kiski-Conemaugh Water Trail Upper Section Map 1 of 4



**Kiski-Conemaugh Water Trail  
Upper Section  
Map 2 of 4**

USACE Conemaugh Dam Project

Blacklick Creek

Newport Creek

Conemaugh River

Blairsville

INDIANA CO

WESTMORELAND CO

Pine Ridge Park

Two Lick Creek

Hoodiebug Trail

Ghost Town

Blacklick Creek

Class III-IV Whitewater

SGL 276

217

119

22

259

44

46

47

48

49

50

52

54

56

57

58

60

62

See Inset Map

Robinson

Bollivar

Class IV-V Whitewater

Richards Run

Mulligan Hill

Climax Rd

Tubmill Creek

Chestnut Ridge

Packsaddle Gap

SGL 153

259

711

Midget Camp Rd

Forbes State Forest

CHESTNUT

Armstrong Co.

Indiana Co.

Cambria Co.

Westmoreland Co.

Somerset Co.

Kiski-Conemaugh Watershed

Freeport

Pittsburgh

Blairsville

Johnstown

Lower Section

Upper Section

0 10 Miles

FisherWorks Consulting~ June 2011

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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\*\**


 <b>85</b>	<b>Greenhouse Park</b> 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).
 <b>81</b>	<b>Baumer St. River Wall</b> Surfaced Ramp - River Right	Lat 40 18 58 Lon 78 54 50	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.
 <b>78</b>	<b>Power St. River Wall</b> Surfaced Ramp - River Left	Lat 40 20 32 Lon 78 55 46	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.
 <b>70</b>	<b>Seward</b> Path - River Left	Lat 40 25 11 Lon 79 01 09	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.
 <b>63</b>	<b>New Florence</b> 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.
 <b>57</b>	<b>Robinson</b> 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.
 <b>56</b>	<b>Bolivar Ball Field</b> 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.
 <b>49</b>	<b>Wyotech Park</b> 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.
 <b>47</b>	<b>Bairdstown Bridge</b> 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)


 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

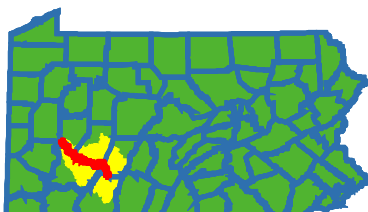
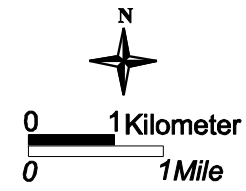
 State Forest

 **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 Johnstown Inclined Plane
  - B Johnstown Flood Museum
  - C Old Stone Bridge
  - D Johnstown Heritage Discovery Center
- Packsaddle Gap**
- E Historic Canal Lock #5
- Blairsville**
- F Blairsville Underground Rail Road Museum
  - G Historical Society of the Blairsville Area & Museum
  - H Blairsville Armory
  - I Blairsville Comm. Recreation Center & Skate Park



### 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
<b>Avg. High(F)</b>	37°	41°	51°	64°	74°	83°	87°	85°	77°	65°	53°	42°
<b>Avg. Low(F)</b>	21°	23°	30°	39°	49°	57°	61°	59°	53°	41°	34°	25°
<b>Avg. Precip.(in)</b>	3.8	3.4	3.9	3.8	4.3	4.9	5.1	4.1	4.1	3.3	3.7	3.3
<b>Sunrise(AM)</b>	7:41	7:13	7:32	6:42	6:03	5:49	6:02	6:30	7:00	7:30	7:05	7:35
<b>Sunset(PM)</b>	5:17	5:54	7:26	7:58	8:28	8:51	8:49	8:18	7:30	6:41	5:03	4:54
<b>Gauge(CFS)</b>	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)

## NATURAL, HISTORIC AND RECREATION FEATURES

### NATURAL AND HISTORIC FEATURES

Paddlers will experience 6 miles of concrete flood control walls starting at river mile 82, passing the Johnstown Inclined Plane and the Conemaugh River Bridge along the way. The Inclined Plane, established in 1891, is the world's steepest vehicular incline. During the 1889 Johnstown Flood, the stone arch bridge blocked debris, which then caught fire and burned for days.

For seven miles, the 1560 feet deep Conemaugh Gorge – the third deepest river gorge in PA – cuts through Laurel Ridge. Efforts are underway to extend trails through the Gorge. A scenic overlook on Rt. 56 is a great place to view this marvel, and a 4.9 mile hiking trail in the Charles L. Lewis Natural Area on river right also provides fantastic views. The natural area, part of Gallitzin State Forest, was named for a newspaperman and first president of the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy.

Laurel Ridge State Park abuts State Game Lands 42 and includes the northern terminus of the 70-mile Laurel Highlands Hiking Trail near Seward. The 1308 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, which makes for a peaceful paddle only occasionally rocked by a passing train.



### FLORA AND FAUNA

Although the entire basin is recovering from years of postindustrial pollution, primarily abandoned mine drainage (AMD), fair numbers of smallmouth and largemouth bass, yellow perch and sunfish can be found. Anglers can also find local pockets of trout where clean, stocked streams meet the main stem. Practicing catch and release will help the fishery continue its recovery.

A majority of the river system is forested. Once heavily logged, paddlers will find a mosaic of eastern hardwoods – black cherry, oak, maple, hemlock and sycamore as well as mountain laurel and rhododendron are all prevalent.

Ospreys and even bald eagles, black bears, deer, wild turkeys, muskrats, blue herons, grouse, wood ducks, mallards and Canada geese all make their homes along the way.

### OUTFITTERS, CAMPING AND VISITOR INFORMATION

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

The Kiski-Conemaugh Water Trail offers opportunities for primitive camping. Paddlers can extend a one day trip to a 2-3 day sojourn, while experiencing natural and recreational features as well as the culture of the river towns referenced in this guide.

**Quemahoning Family Rec Area** Hollsopple (814) 233-9512  
<http://www.quefamilyrec.com/>

**Cernic's Campground** Johnstown (814) 242-8187

For additional visitor services information, including bed and breakfasts and other lodging options in the corridor:

**Greater Johnstown and Cambria County Convention & Visitors Bureau** (814) 536-7993 [www.visitjohnstownpa.com](http://www.visitjohnstownpa.com)

**The Alleghenies** (800) 458-3433 [www.thealleghenies.com](http://www.thealleghenies.com)

**The Laurel Highlands Visitors Bureau** (724) 238-5661  
[www.laurelhighlands.org](http://www.laurelhighlands.org)

**Indiana County Tourist Bureau** (724) 463-7505  
[www.visitindianacountypa.org](http://www.visitindianacountypa.org)

### SUPPORT THE WORK OF ENVIRONMENTAL PARTNERS!

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 red.

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](http://www.scrippa.org)

To learn more about watershed associations, conservation districts and other conservation groups, visit:

[www.conemaughvalleyconservancy.org](http://www.conemaughvalleyconservancy.org)

### 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.



Photo: Len Lichvar

### 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. 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 for 360°) 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 for 360°), 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 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](http://www.fishandboat.com). Click on "Permits & Forms" and then "Boat Registration."
- 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](http://www.fishandboat.com).

### STEWARDSHIP

Help care for the land, water and cultural resources along the Kiski-Conemaugh Water Trail by respecting wildlife, nature and other people. "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](http://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.



## JOHNSTOWN (RIVER MILES 81-78)



Photo: Greater Johnstown and Cambria County Convention and Visitors Bureau

In the mid to late 1700s, Johnstown was the junction for moving goods from the Juniata River system to the Ohio River system, and all points west. Horses hauled heavy loads of iron along the Frankstown Road to Johnstown. The iron was then carried by flatboat down the Conemaugh to the Allegheny River, to industrial users in Pittsburgh and as far away as New Orleans. The volume of commercial traffic was so great that the Conemaugh River was declared a public highway in the 1790s.

When the Main Line Canal came to Johnstown in the 1830s, the city became one of the primary inland ports in Pennsylvania. By the 1850s, the Pennsylvania Railroad replaced the canal system and kept Johnstown in the forefront of the industrial era.

In the mid 19th century, an era of industrial degradation began. 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, dramatically increasing flood risk. Sewage waste ran directly into the river. Johnstown suffered devastating public health consequences – illness and death ran rampant due to pollution and poor water quality.

The catastrophic 1889 flood made Johnstown infamous. When history repeated itself with the May 18, 1936, flood, Johnstown citizenry engaged in political advocacy resulting in a mandate to build a system able to control 1936 level flooding. Accordingly, the concrete channels were completed in 1953.

Time, the decline of the industrial age, and environmental restoration efforts have brought the rivers back to life. The view from the Johnstown Incline reveals work yet to be done where the AMD-polluted Little Conemaugh joins the better-restored Stonycreek River.

Johnstown is emerging as a surprising mecca for outdoor recreation enthusiasts. Featured are the area's only in-river whitewater park, year-round, world-class whitewater adventures on the Stony stimulated by regular releases from the Quemahoning Reservoir, and flat water paddling through the Conemaugh Gap. See [www.TheStonycreek.com](http://www.TheStonycreek.com) for water release schedule and updates.



Heedless to environmental and public health threats of unchecked industrial development, a 1917 Johnstown Master Plan included options for beautiful riverfront beaches. Image: Johnstown Area Heritage Association.



Tubers enjoy clean water recreation on the Stony

## 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.

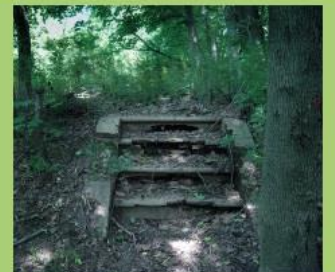
On May 31, 1889, people in Blairsville didn't know why the waters were rising until 6:00 p.m. when a telegram

was received stating that a mighty torrent of water was carrying hundreds of people away. The raging waters of the Johnstown Flood traveled down the Conemaugh to Blairsville to the Kiski and eventually down the Allegheny to Pittsburgh. That day people with ropes lined the Blairsville (now 217) and Cokeville bridges hoping to rescue any who might pass under, but darkness came on, and the bridges later collapsed.

Devastation caused by repeated flooding led to the flood control area in Blairsville, and construction of the Conemaugh Dam in 1949.

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 large areas of Blairsville, and nearly all of 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 community is a hub between the **West Penn and Hoodlebug/Ghost Town Trails**.



Hidden steps hint at Blairsville's secret past



For regional trail maps, visit [www.indianacountyparks.org/](http://www.indianacountyparks.org/)



# Kiski- Conemaugh River Water Trail

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

