



# Kiski - Conemaugh Water Trail

*Lower Section*

*Blairsville-to-Freeport*

River Miles: 48

## 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 Blairsville to Freeport.

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



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### FLOATING THE KISKI-CONEMAUGH RIVER

The ability to paddle the Kiski-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.

This section of the river features several dramatic character changes. The Conemaugh River Lake provides 8,954 acres of flatwater. Use caution when planning trips, as the Conemaugh Dam is not portageable. The lake twists under century-old stone arch railroad bridges that now bear the West Penn

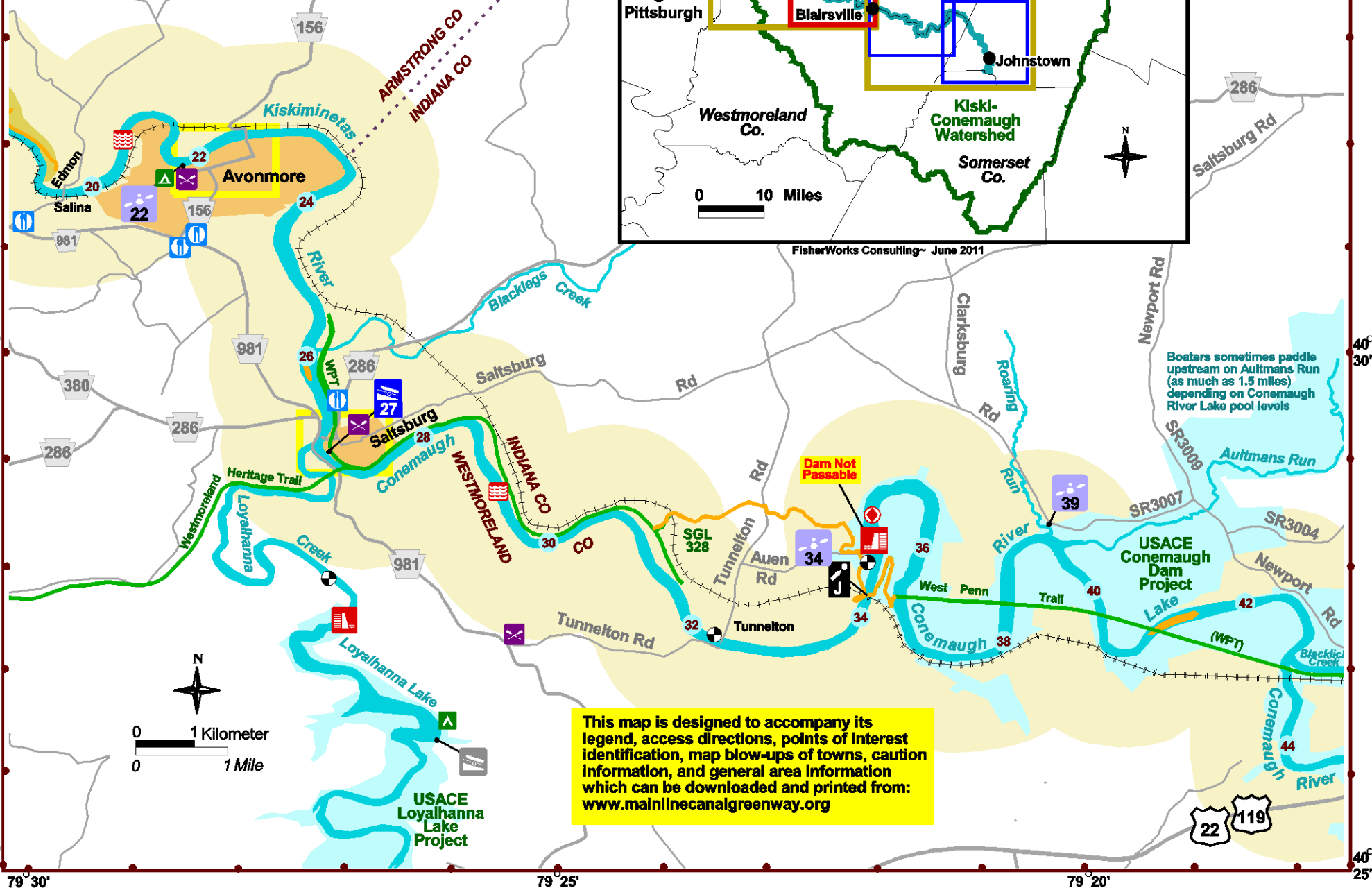
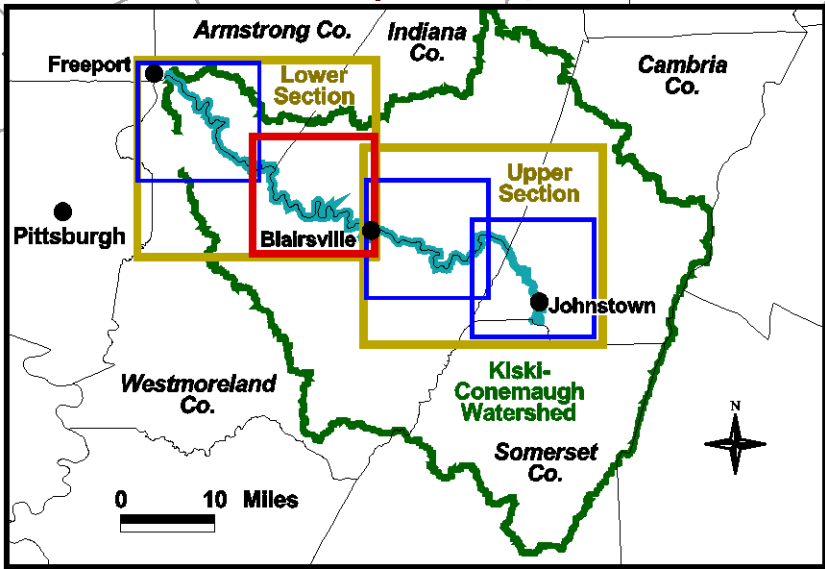
Trail. Below the Dam, the Tunnelview Historic Site access takes paddlers to Saltsburg on relatively flat water. The Kiskiminetas begins where the Loyalhanna Creek joins the Conemaugh. Deep pools just past Avonmore give way to riffles and waves as the gorge narrows closer to Apollo.

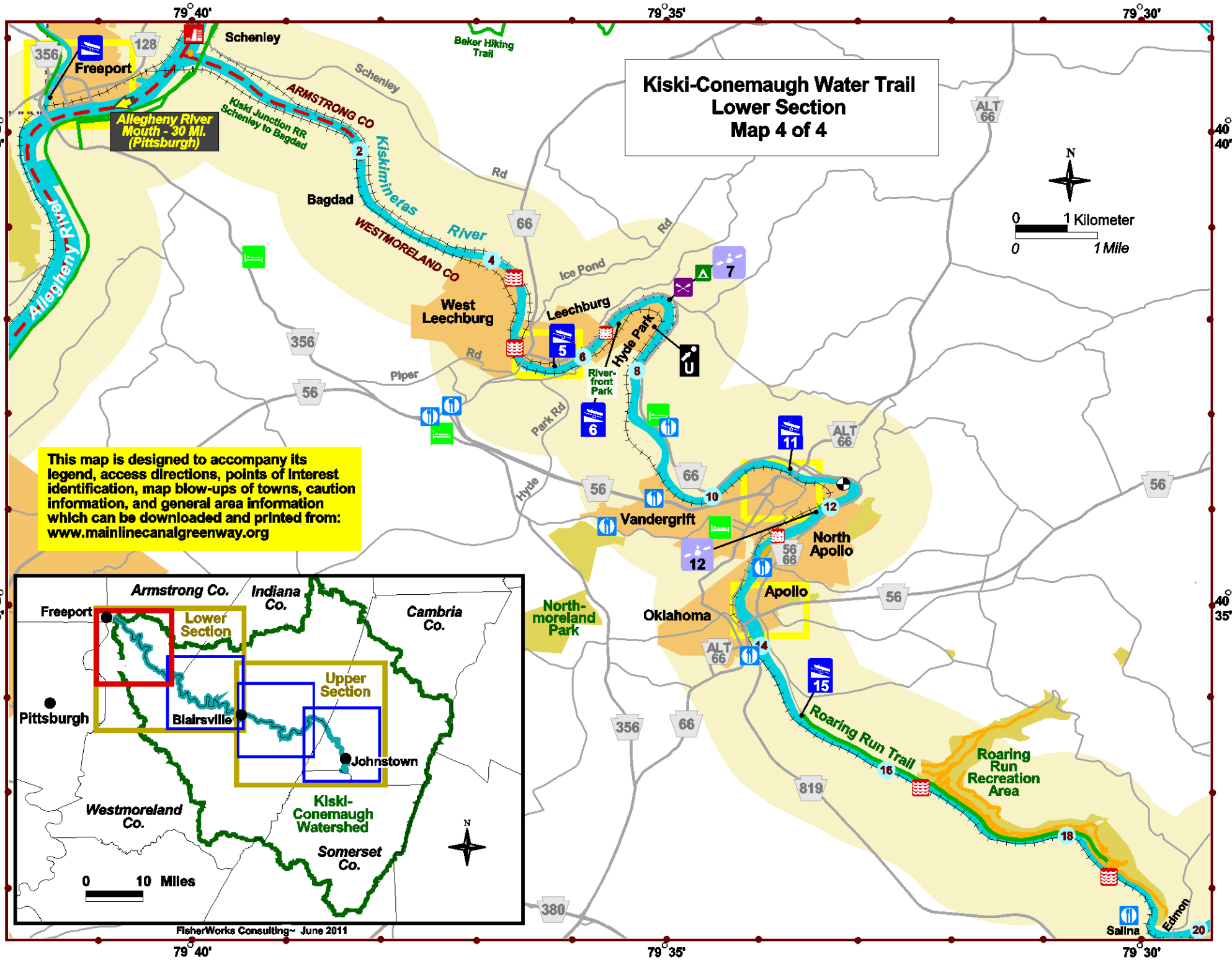
Stream flow can change rapidly creating potentially unsafe conditions. Check weather, precipitation, and local outfitters to plan accordingly. For current water levels, do a search for "Tunnelton USGS Gauge" or "Vandergrift USGS Gauge" on the internet. The suggested minimum at both Tunnelton and Vandergrift is 640 cfs or 3 feet.

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.

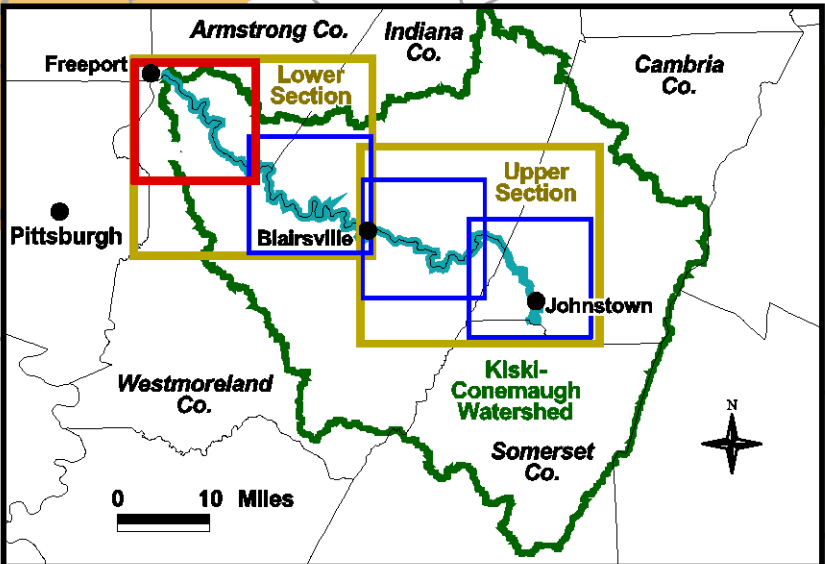


**Kiski-Conemaugh Water Trail  
Lower Section  
Map 3 of 4**





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 River Water Trail Access Sites**


## **Lower Section - Maps 3 & 4**


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

 <b>34</b>	<b>Conemaugh Dam</b> Steps - Primitive - River Right	Lat 40 27 40 Lon 79 22 06	From US 22 take PA 981 N toward Saltsburg. Turn R on Tunnelton Rd at Marshall's Market. Go 2.7 miles and turn L over bridge then turn R onto Auen Road (follow brown and white Conemaugh Dam directional signs from 981). Follow through parklette and down a big hill.
 <b>27</b>	<b>Saltsburg - Rivers Edge Park</b> Paved Ramp-River Right	Lat 40 29 04 Lon 79 27 11	From US 22 take PA 981 N toward Saltsburg. Follow 981 about 8 miles to PA 286, turn R over bridge and make immediate R onto Water St. Access is on R below Rivers Edge deck.
 <b>22</b>	<b>Avonmore</b> Ramp - River Left	Lat 40 31 45 Lon 79 28 31	From US 22 take PA 981 N toward Saltsburg. Follow 981 about 10 miles and turn R onto PA 156 N at corner with equestrian center. Continue to stop sign at Westmoreland and 2nd Sts. Turn L onto gravel drive at Avonmore Municipal Authority Water Collection Area.
 <b>15</b>	<b>Roaring Run Recreation Area</b> Paved Ramp-River Right	Lat 40 33 48 Lon 79 33 36	From PA 66 N cross bridge into Apollo using R lane. Make immediate R onto Kiski Ave., follow 3/4 mile, staying R and low onto Canal Rd., 0.7 miles to trail head on R.
 <b>12</b>	<b>East Vandergrift</b> Primitive - River Left	Lat 40 35 56 Lon 79 33 29	From US 22 take PA 66 N. At Apollo bridge make L onto McKinley Ave (don't cross bridge). Follow 1.5 miles to R onto Chambers, go to stop sign. Turn L onto Kennedy, go to stop sign. Turn R and go over RR tracks. Make L onto alley along tracks to park at end of street.
 <b>11</b>	<b>North Vandergrift</b> Paved Ramp-River Right	Lat 40 36 24 Lon 79 33 40	From PA 56 E cross bridge heading northeast over Kiskiminetas River in Vandergrift. Make immediate L onto Jefferson St. Make another immediate L into the access area.
 <b>7</b>	<b>Rivers Edge Canoe and Kayak</b> <b>Private</b> River Right	Lat 40 38 14 Lon 79 35 01	Private, \$5 parking/launch fee. From PA 28 take 356 S, then L onto PA 356/56. Follow across Leechburg Bridge and turn R onto PA 66 S. Follow 1.5 miles to River's Edge on L (Rivers Edge is also 3 miles from Vandergrift bridge coming from S on R.)
 <b>6</b>	<b>Hyde Park</b> Surfaced Ramp - River Left	Lat 40 37 58 Lon 79 35 32	From Leechburg take the 3rd St Bridge S over the Kiski River. Go 0.5 miles and turn L onto S. Gosser Hill Rd (turning lane). Stay straight for 1.7 miles to borough (becomes Railroad St). Turn L onto Main St. at fire hall, cross RR tracks, turn L onto Kiski St. to ramp on R.
 <b>5</b>	<b>Leechburg</b> Surfaced Ramp - River Right	Lat 40 37 29 Lon 79 36 15	From PA 28 take PA 356 S, then 56 E toward Leechburg. Cross bridge and turn R onto PA 66/Market St. From N turn R onto 1st St. Follow two blocks to river.
 <b>Freeport (PFBC)</b>	Surfaced Ramp - River Left	Lat 40 40 21 Lon 79 41 31	From PA 356 (Leechburg) go N toward Freeport over high bridge, merge onto Freeport Rd-stay in R lane to Freeport exit. Merge onto 2nd St, one block turn R onto High St. One block to ramp on R. Located ~1000 feet upstream on Buffalo Creek from Allegheny River.


# Kiski-Conemaugh River Water Trail Lower Section


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


 **River Access Site with Ramp and Parking (ID Number is the Approximate River Mile - See Chart for Directions)**


 **34 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)**


 **Riffles / Waves**


 **Caution**


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


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


 **USGS Stream Flow Gauge Station (Internet Accessible)**


 **Camp Sites - with Restrooms**


 **Hotels and Motels**


 **Restaurants**


 **Point of Interest**


 **Hospital**


 **Public Library - Identification Required for Internet Access**


 **Possible Motorboat Traffic - Caution**


 **Rail Trail**


 **Other Trails**


 **County Boundary**

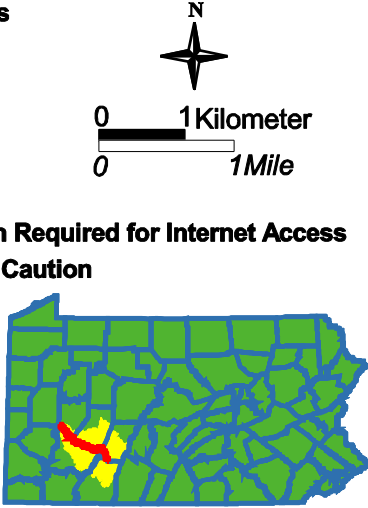
 **River Island**


 **City or Borough**

 **Local Park**

 **U.S. Army Corps of Engineers**

 **Pittsburgh-to-Harrisburg Main Line Canal Greenway™**



 **Points of Interest**  
Lower Section

**Conemaugh Dam**

**J** Tunnelview Historic Site

**Saltsburg**

**K** Rebecca J. Hadden Stone House Museum

**L** 1863 West Penn Railroad Piers

**Apollo**

**M** Drakes Log Cabin

**N** Apollo Area Historical Society-Women's Christian Temperance Union Building

**O** General Jackson's Mansion

**P** Nellie Bly's House

**Vandergrift**

**Q** St. Gertrude's Catholic Church

**R** Victorian Vandergrift Museum and Historical Society

**S** Historic Train Depot

**T** Casino Theatre and Vandergrift Library

**Hyde Park**

**U** Hyde Park Historical Museum

**Leechburg**

**V** Leechburg Area Museum and Historical Society/David Leech House

**Freeport**

**W** Laneville Grist Mill

**Monthly Average Information for Vandergrift, PA**

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Avg. High(F)</b>	37°	40°	50°	61°	71°	79°	83°	82°	75°	64°	52°	42°
<b>Avg. Low(F)</b>	15°	16°	24°	33°	44°	52°	57°	55°	48°	37°	29°	21°
<b>Avg. Precip.(In)</b>	2.6	2.5	3.3	3.3	4.2	4.2	4.5	3.9	3.7	2.6	3.5	2.9
<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>	3,880	4,620	6,470	5,580	3,680	2,440	1,480	1,180	1,110	1,290	2,030	3,390

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

### **Caution Information**

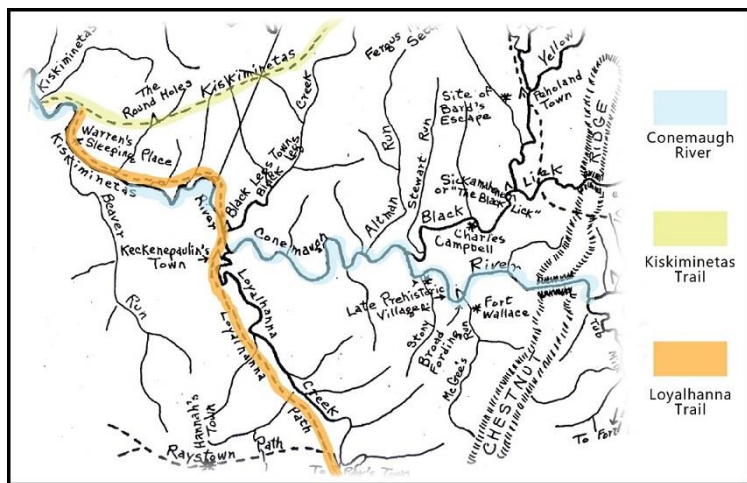
Several riffles are identified on the map that can be navigated with minimal paddling experience. Avoid the upstream side of bridge abutments. The Conemaugh Dam can not be portaged at this time. Motorboat traffic can be heavy from miles 2 through 0 and into the Allegheny River.

## NATURAL AND HISTORIC FEATURES

### NATURAL AND HISTORIC FEATURES

Native heritage is reflected in several place names: Conemaugh – derived from conunmoch, meaning “otter”; Kiskiminetas – from geischgumanito, has been interpreted as “make daylight” from gisch-gu (“day”) and ma-nit-toon (“to make”) or, from kee-ak-kshee-man-nit-toos, “cut spirit,” from gischkschummen (“cut with a knife”), and manitto (“spirit”).

The Monongahela were pre-historic people known to the area, particularly around Blairsville. Later, the Senecas, Delaware, and Shawnee were prominent. An extensive network of trails, paths, and villages paralleled and crossed the rivers. The Kuskusky Path, or Loyahanna Trail, crossed what is now Westmoreland County and then traveled north to join the Kiskiminetas Trail near Apollo. Then it was on to the Kittanning Trail, the major thoroughfare.



The Main Line Canal figured prominently in community development along this corridor. Although visible remnants are rare, river and trail users can find remnants on river right:

Mile 26	Blacklegs Creek Aqueduct	West Penn Trail
Mile 19	Revetment wall & Flat Run towpath bridge	Roaring Run Trail
Mile 16	Guard Lock #2	Roaring Run Trail



Photo: Dan Cappel

### FLORA AND FAUNA

Biodiversity has rebounded with river restoration, including the return of some species many conservationists thought they'd never again see.

Canada geese, mallard and wood ducks, and Baltimore and orchard orioles are abundant in the river system, along with songbirds like the Louisiana waterthrush and woodthrush. Eastern kingbirds like to nest in the trees near the Avonmore canoe launch. Occasionally, paddlers can see green or great blue heron and osprey. Bald eagle sightings are increasing in the Kiski Valley.

Paw-Paw, oak, maple, hemlock, and sycamore trees are found in the Valley, along with mountain laurel and rhododendron. Springtime blooms are best seen in April and early May. Along some of its trails, the Roaring Run Recreation Area boasts an amazing trillium display.

Fish the Conemaugh River Lake to land largemouth bass, pan fish and the occasional musky or northern pike. Below the dam, catch walleye, perch, trout, carp, catfish, pan fish, and several bass species. A smallmouth bass habitat exists in the deep pools near Avonmore.

### 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 rivers have improved. Thanks to the work of the **Kiski-Conemaugh Stream Team**, we know how much. The Stream Team monitors water quality at sites throughout the entire Kiski-Conemaugh Basin. Hundreds of volunteers gather samples that are analyzed by the Department of Environmental Protection and used to document the effectiveness of abandoned mine drainage treatment systems and other river improvement efforts. **Nature Abounds- Biodiversity** works to restore a healthy riparian buffer by tackling invasive plant species like Japanese Knotweed, multiflora rose, and garlic mustard.

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

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

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: Melissa Reckner

### 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.

## RIVER, CANAL, AND RAIL TOWNS

The Kiskiminetas is punctuated by several river towns on both sides of the river, with stretches of open space and wooded hillsides in between. These towns flourished during the Main Line Canal-era, and from the industrial development associated with the Pennsylvania Railroad-era that followed. Here's a snapshot of the tales the towns can tell:



### Saltsburg (River Miles 28-27)

The town of Saltsburg grew as a result of - and was named for - its role in the salt industry from 1798 to as late as the 1890s. The town is now a hub for the West Penn and Westmoreland Heritage trails and features a Canal Park walkway interpreting the role of the Pennsylvania Main Line Canal in the town's development.



### Avonmore (River Miles 24-20)

You may recognize Avonmore from the 2012 movie, *Promised Land*. It was the main setting for the film's rural town of "McKinley." Hollywood aside, Avonmore history dates back to before the Revolutionary War. The area's first European settler, Stephen Rinebolt, settled here around 1732, eventually drawing more families from his native Holland to this "plain by the river."



### Apollo (River Miles 14-13)

Apollo was originally known as Warren, or "Warren's Sleeping Place", for 1730s Native American trader Edward Warren, although local legend credits the name to a mythical Native American chief allegedly buried there. Canal remnants and coal mining artifacts can be found along the mountain biking, hiking, and rail trails of the nearby Roaring Run Recreation Area.



### Vandergrift (River Miles 12-9)

Visit Vandergrift and experience the different look and feel of this Frederick Law Olmsted model industrial town. Vandergrift founder George G. McMurty wanted to create an industrial community that would be "something better than the best" and in so doing created the first worker owned community in America. The community is working to recapture its original eco-friendly, sustainable plan.



### Leechburg (River Miles 6-5)

Young engineer David Leech established his namesake community in 1827 when he secured a contract to construct a dam and lock on the canal. Leech went on to build four homes, the first school, and a grist mill. Between Leechburg's Riverfront Park and boat launch, you'll find an alley way, houses, and buildings reminiscent of an 1800's river town commerce area.



### Freeport (River Mile 0)

Although originally known as Todds-town, Freeport got its current name when founding brothers William and David Todd declared that no dockage fee would be required of rafts, boats and other rivercraft landing here. This jewel of a town now enjoys a Riverfront Park and boat launch for larger craft to access the Allegheny.

## OUTFITTERS AND VISITOR INFORMATION

Camping opportunities in this corridor are currently minimal, but developing. Several outfitters are available to help plan and implement your trip according to paddling experience, water levels and equipment needs.

Pasternak Primitive Campground  
The River's Edge Canoe and Kayak  
Saltsburg Kayak and Canoe Outfitters  
Saltsburg River and Trail  
Two Dam Kayak Rentals

(724) 388-2123  
(724) 845-9501  
(724) 252-8520  
(724) 639-1314  
(724) 541-7447

Avonmore, PA  
<http://the-rivers-edge.com/>  
<http://saltsburgkayak.com/>  
<https://www.facebook.com/kayaksrt>  
<http://www.twodamkayakrentals.com/>

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

Indiana County Tourist Bureau  
Armstrong County Tourist Bureau  
Laurel Highlands Visitors Bureau  
Visit Pittsburgh

(724) 463-7505  
(724) 543-4003  
(724) 238-5661  
(412) 281-7711

[www.visitindianacountypa.org](http://www.visitindianacountypa.org)  
[www.armstrongcounty.com](http://www.armstrongcounty.com)  
[www.laurelhighlands.org](http://www.laurelhighlands.org)  
[www.visitpittsburgh.com](http://www.visitpittsburgh.com)



# Kiski-Conemaugh River Water Trail

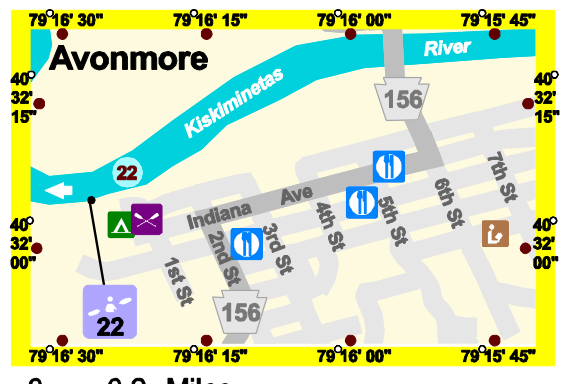
## Lower Section Town Blow-Ups

(See Legend for Icons and Points of Interest Identification)

### Saltsburg



### Avonmore



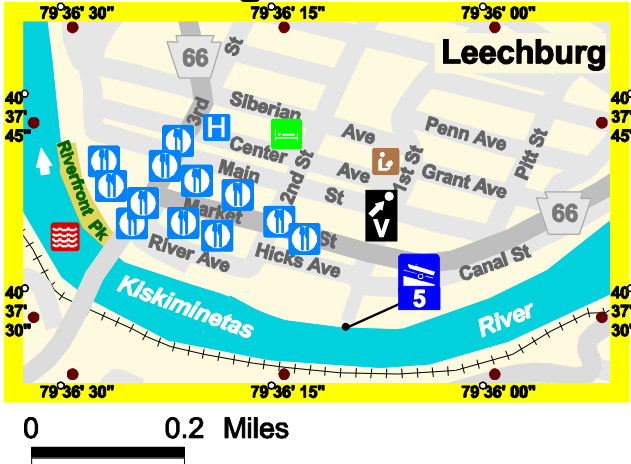
### Apollo



### Vandergrift



### Leechburg



### Freeport

