

Upper Monongahela River Water Trail

Map and Guide

Water trails are recreational waterways on a lake, river, or ocean between specific locations, containing access points and day-use and/or camping sites for the boating public. Water trails emphasize low-impact use and promote stewardship of the resources. Explore this unique West Virginia and Pennsylvania water trail.



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.

THE MONONGAHELA RIVER

The Monongahela River, locally known as “the Mon,” forms at the confluence of the Tygart and West Fork Rivers in Fairmont West Virginia. It flows north 129 miles to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, where it joins the Allegheny River to form the Ohio River. The upper section, which is described in this brochure, extends 68 miles from Fairmont to Maxwell Lock and Dam in Pennsylvania.

The Monongahela River formed some 20 million years ago. When pioneers first saw the Mon, there were many places where they could walk across it. The Native American named the river “Monongahela,” which is said to mean “river with crumbling or falling banks.”

The Mon is a hard-working river. It moves a large amount of water, sediment, and freight. The average flow at Point Marion is 4,300 cubic feet per second. The elevation on the Upper Mon ranges from 891 feet in Fairmont to 763 feet in the Maxwell Pool.

PLANNING A TRIP

Trips on the Mon may be solitary and silent, or they may provide encounters with motor boats and water skiers or towboats moving barges of coal or limestone. The diverse uses of the Mon provide many opportunities for recreation and define the major hazards to consider when planning a trip.

A series of locks and dams keep the Mon deep enough-with a nine-foot channel-for tow boats and barges. The Upper Mon is divided into six, slow-moving pools. Two of the upper three pools, those formed by the Hildebrand and Morgantown Dams, are largely undeveloped and ideal for floating and fishing. The lower pools, formed by the Point Marion, Grays Landing, and Maxwell Dams, contain forested stretches but also have coal tipples and other industrial sites. They also contain more cities and towns with riverside amenities and hospitality for boaters. Many towns along all parts of the Upper Mon are developing their waterfronts to welcome boaters.

Currents are generally not a danger except after heavy storms. One can usually paddle upstream almost as easily as downstream. However, the river is not without its hazards. Every boat must be on the lookout for every other kind of boat. Barges appear suddenly around the river's bends. They move quickly and cannot maneuver to avoid smaller boats. The water is often cloudy, and large debris, such as floating trees, can be difficult to see. The slow current gives little help to paddlers headed downstream, and headwinds can slow their progress. Public safety depends on every boater's situational awareness.

The United Army Corps of Engineers offers detailed information at <http://www.lrp.usace.army.mil/nat.htm#charts>. *Quimby's Cruising Guide: Annual Directory for Cruising the Inlands Waterways* provides information on boater services, such as overnight dockage; call 314-241-7354. Pennsylvania and West Virginia offer free downloads of County Road Maps. For Pennsylvania maps visit www.dot.state.pa.us, and for West Virginia maps visit www.wvdot.com.

EMERGENCY NUMBER: 911

RESPECT THE RIGHTS OF LANDOWNERS

Please respect the privacy and rights of landowners along the Upper Monongahela River Water Trail by obtaining permission before entering any privately owned land. There are no public lands for camping in the West Virginia reach of the river. Unless you are otherwise certain, assume the land is privately property. In any case, avoid loud noises and boisterous behavior. Remember that sound carries across water much more clearly than on land. Some of the landowners enjoy peace and solitude by the river in their backyards. Use the same courtesy that you would want. A friendly wave or quiet greeting is always welcome.

FISHING OPPORTUNITIES

The Mon supports a diverse fishery including the species shown at right and more. Bass fishing tournaments are held on many summer weekends and weekday evenings. Check current fishing regulations, fishing seasons, and fish consumption advisories or purchase a license on line at www.dnr.state.wv.us or www.fish.state.pa.us.

STEWARDSHIP

Help care for the land, water and cultural resources along the Upper Monongahela River by respecting wildlife, nature, and other recreationists. It is important to wash footwear, boats, and vehicles to minimize the spread of invasive species and fish diseases from one body of water to another. **Drain live wells and bilges before leaving the area.** “Leave No Trace,” a national outdoor ethics program, provides some guidelines to minimize your impact. For more information about “Leave No Trace” ethics, visit www.LNT.org.



SAFETY

Personal Responsibility

Safe use of rivers and any designated trails, at any time, is your responsibility. The partners who produced this brochure are not responsible or liable for any injury or loss resulting directly or indirectly from a trip on the Upper Monongahela or any other river.

Safety issues on the Upper Mon

Watch out for dams! Know your location on the river with regard to each lock & dam. Keep a sharp lookout for the “DANGER DAM” signs and buoys.

Watch out for tow boats and barges! These boats move quickly and silently and require a lot of stopping and maneuvering space. Stay clear.
Know river conditions! Call a lock master (see Land-side Services table on map side).

Safety tips for all craft:

Wear your life jacket. Some 80 percent of all recreational boating fatalities happen to people who are not wearing a life jacket.

Be alert to all boats on the water, large or small.

Pay attention to swimmers.

Watch for submerged debris, which may be lodged in the river bed or floating freely.

Know the river. Avoid surprises.

Be prepared for the weather. Get a forecast before you go. Sudden winds and rain are common and can turn a pleasant trip into a risky, unpleasant venture.

If your trip depends on lock hours or other riverside services, make sure those services will be available when you need them.

Safety tips for small craft:

Stay close to the edges of the river, outside the channel used by barges.

Be prepared to swim. If the water looks too hazardous to swim in, don't boat in a small craft. Even the best paddlers sometimes capsize or swamp their boats. Bring extra clothing in a waterproof bag.

Never boat alone. Boating safety increases with numbers.

Never tie a rope to yourself or to another paddler, especially a child.

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 return.

Keep painter lines (ropes tied to the bow) and any other ropes coiled and secured.

BOATING REGULATIONS

You are responsible for knowing the regulations for the states where you are boating. West Virginia and Pennsylvania boating regulations are similar but not identical. Find them at www.fish.state.pa.us or www.wvdot.com/6g_dmv.htm. In West Virginia, all persons born after 12/31/1986 must complete a boating education course before operating a motorboat.

One wearable, Coast Guard-approved personal flotation device (PFD or life jacket) in serviceable condition and of the appropriate size is required for each person in your boat. In addition, if your boat is 16 feet or longer, one Type IV throwable device required. All flotation devices must be accessible; not in an enclosed compartment. Canoes and kayaks, regardless of length, are not required to carry a throwable device.

Life jackets must be worn by all children under 12 years old and younger on all boats in West Virginia, and on boats 20 feet or less in length in Pennsylvania while under way, and on all canoes and kayaks. Others are strongly encouraged to wear a PFD at all times on the water.

In Pennsylvania and West Virginia, all boats must display an anchor light (a white light visible 360 degrees) when at anchor between sunset and sunrise or in periods of low visibility. 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, all unpowered boats, including canoes and kayaks, must carry a white light (visible at a distance of 2 miles), installed or portable, ready to be displayed in time to avoid a collision.

All powered boats are required to carry a sound-producing mechanical device audible for a half-mile. Athletic whistles meet this requirement.

All powered boats must be registered regardless of where they launch.

Unpowered boats (canoes, kayaks, rowboats, rafts) using Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission access areas must either be registered OR display a valid launch permit.

Purchase launch permits at www.fish.state.pa.us.

Operating any watercraft under the influence of alcohol or drugs is illegal. The law is strongly enforced for user safety.

USEFUL DEFINITIONS

Locks, pools, and tailwaters

Locks: Chambers adjoining dams where water levels can be raised or lowered to aid boat passage.

Pool: The long stretches of relatively slow river between locks. Pools are named after the downstream lock and dam.

Tailwater: The area downstream from the dams where the fast water discharging from the dam mixes with the river.

Docking terminology

Courtesy dock: Anyone may dock for a few hours.

Transient dock: Anyone may stay for a few hours or a few days.

Seasonal dock: One must rent a place to dock, usually on a yearly basis.

BIG dock: Transient dock for large, non-trailerable boats (funded by the Boating Infrastructure Grant program). Overnight use allowed.

ALONG THE WAY—UPPER MONONGAHELA RIVER WATER TRAIL (MILES MATCH RIVER MILEAGE ON MAP)

Tygart River

Mile 130, Woods Boat House—Located on the upper navigational reach of the Tygart River near I-79, services include boat ramp, seasonal & courtesy dock, gas, electric, water, marine supplies, sales & service.

West Fork River

Mile 128, West Fork River Rail-Trail- Trail access in Mary Lou Retton Park, which lies approximately one mile up the West Fork River.

Monongahela River

Mile 128, Head-Of-The-Mon Park—This parcel of public land marks the confluence of the Tygart and West Fork rivers, which form the Monongahela River.

Mile 127, Fairmont—Founded in 1899. Palatine Park, under the historic High Level Bridge, provides a public boat ramp, 50' transient dock at 4' deep, parking, and picnic area. A shopping district is nearby on Merchant Street, with gas, restaurant, bar, phone. Fairmont's waterfront is currently undergoing redevelopment planning—watch it change!

Mile 122, Rivesville—Founded in 1875. This small, welcoming town is undergoing change as they focus its attention on its history and the river. The Rivesville Power Station dates to 1917. The riverfront is being developed for public access and includes transient docks, and a pavilion. Nearby services include gas, minimart, and seasonal docks.

Mile 121, Prickett's Fort State Park—Located at the mouth of Pricketts Creek, the park offers a visitor center, gift shop, restrooms, boat ramp, picnic area, parking, rail-trail access, a fort established in 1781, and amphitheater with reenactments, concerts, plays, and educational heritage programs.

Mile 121, Marion County Trail & RR Trestle—This rail-trail can be accessed at Prickett's Fort State Park. The former Monongahela Railway Bridge is soon to be converted to rail-trail.



Mile 102, Morgantown Wharf District—This historic warehouse district includes the Upper Mon River Center, transient and seasonal docks. An exercise course lies along the Mon River Trail here. There are restaurants, a hotel, medical care, and other businesses. A jitney bus runs routes to Downtown, Riverfront Park, and the Wharf.

Mile 101, Morgantown—Founded in 1785. The Hazel Ruby McQuain Riverfront Park includes a BIG dock, small boat ramp (but no trailer parking), restroom, amphitheater, parking, rail-trail access, old railroad depot / visitor center / bus station. All city & county buses depart from this location. www.tourmorgantown.com 1-800-458-7373.

Mile 100, Seneca Center—this restored historic glass factory is now host to an indoor shopping mall, bike shop, and glass museum. Nearby is the Morgantown Power Station fishing pier.

Mile 99, WVU Core Arboretum—the 91 acre Arboretum is mostly old growth forest on steep hillsides and the Monongahela River floodplain. 3.5 miles of hiking trails provide access to wooded areas and 3 acres of planted specimen trees. Best known for its “spring ephemeral” wildflowers, the Arboretum is a great place to observe and enjoy trees, plants, and birds.

Mile 97, Star City—Founded in 1907. Star City Edith Barill Riverfront Park includes a boat ramp, courtesy and BIG dock, handicapped fishing pier, pavilion, parking, playground, restrooms, and rail-trail access. Within 2 blocks are a pharmacy, restaurants, and motels.

Mile 95, Mark’s Marine Repair—Boat repairs, bait, seasonal and overnight dockage, and ramp.



Mile 94, Fort Marin Public Access Site—Boat ramp, courtesy dock (Open Summer 2009). The Fort Martin Power Station is just downstream.

Mile 90, Point Marion—Founded in 1842. Located at the confluence of the Cheat River with the Mon, Point Marion boats a full business district including supermarket, restaurants, gas and legal beverages. The Community Park provides restrooms, picnic pavilions, ball fields, playground, parking, boat ramp, limestone walking trail and 100' BIG dock. The Cheat Lake Dam is located 3.5 miles up the Cheat River.

Mile 88, Two Rivers Marina and Campground—This popular destination for local boaters provides dock & dine facilities, beverages, transient docking, ramp, restrooms, showers, laundry pool, primitive/RV camping, gas, electric, ice, and phone.

Mile 88, Friendship Hill National Historic Site—Administered by the National Park Service, Friendship Hill was the home of Albert Gallatin during America's early republic. The Gallatin house is open daily from 9 A.M. to 5 P.M. The 661 acres of park grounds and 10 miles of trails are open from sunrise to sunset. Canoe and kayak access to the main trail system is available at river mile 86.1 south of the railroad bridge. The unimproved landing site is for day use only. Camping is not permitted in the park. Information at www.nps.gov/frhi.

Mile 85, Greensboro—Founded in 1781. This small historic potter town is working on a riverside trail, river access improvements, and artisan center. You can launch your canoe or kayaks at the Volunteer Fire Department and the old ferry landing at the bottom of County Street. The Borough owns the Old Lock 7 building and lock wall. Services include a restored log cabin with reproduction Greensboro pottery for sale, unique bookstore and vintage collectibles shop, confectionery, bar/restaurant, and a bed & breakfast/inn, all in the Historic District.

Mile 83, Glassworks—This site of the first glassworking west of the Mon River dates back to 1805. A new PAFBC boat ramp with docks and fishing piers has ample parking. Services include a bar, restaurant, and convenience store. Mon View Park includes swimming pool, picnic pavilions, parking, ball fields, playground, and roller rink. The Warrior Trail (hiking) starts here and ends at Fish Creek on the Ohio River.

Mile 80, Masontown—Founded in 1876. The major development of this town is away from the river, but there is a hand-launch area upstream of Route 21. Hatfield's Ferry Power Station is diagonally across the river.

Mile 68, Rices Landing—Founded in 1792. This riverfront area is available for public use. The Borough owns the historic Lock 6 wall and lockhouses. A boat ramp on Pumpkin Run includes 1000' of transient docks. Camping is allowed at Pumpkin Run Park, where the Catawba Trail begins. This foot trail leaves the Mon and crosses Greene County to Mason & Dixon Historical Park on the PA-WV border. The Greene River Trail (a rail-trail) bisects the town. Historic tours feature the W.A. Young Foundry and

Machine Shop, a 100-year old two-cell jail, and Lock 6 Museum. Services include lodging, café, restrooms, picnic area, fishing wall, gazebo park, and pirate ship playground.

Mile 67, Greene River Trail-- Access to this 5.2 mile rail-trail lies at the confluence of Ten Mile Creek and at Rices Landing.

Mile 67, Ten Mile Creek—This wide tributary hosts numerous marinas, docks, ramps, and parks.

Mile 64, Fredericktown— Founded in 1790 and companion town Millsboro, founded in 1840. This small river town boats the only remaining ferry on the Mon. There is a public transient boat dock owned by the Township next to the library. Other services include a meat market, produce market, gift and flower shop, bank, beer distributors, state liquor store, restaurant, bar, laundromat, gas station.

LOCKING

On any long trip on the Upper Mon Water Trail, you will encounter a lock. Recreational vessels may use the locks without charge. Passage usually takes about 20 minutes if no other vessels are in the lock.

Carry an appropriate line (about 10 feet for a kayak or canoe, more for heavier boats) to secure your boat to the floating pins in the lock chamber wall. Let the lockmaster know you want to pass through by pulling a signal rope on the approach lock wall. You may also use a cell phone (see contact information in the Land-side Services table on the other side of the brochure) or VHF Marine radio (use channel 16). Stay behind designated points on the approach wall until the lockmaster opens the gates and signals. Tell the lock personnel if you need help: they are friendly and are happy to assist you.

The Land-side Services Table indicates which side of the river the lock is on. L and R refer to the side where you will find the lock on your downstream journey. Stay on that side and stay between the red and green buoys. The dam is on the other side and has very dangerous currents. Steer clear of it.

The Army Corps of Engineers has more information about locks and navigation on the Mon at <http://www.lrp.usace.army.mil/or/or-f/navrpt.htm>

Mon River Lock Hours: Boaters should note that the three West Virginia locks have limited hours of operation while the Pennsylvania locks are open 24/7. Check the Corps of Engineers website for specific locking hours. Morgantown Lock is operated daily for 8 hours throughout the year. Hildebrand and Opekiska locks will only be open for 8 hours on Friday to Sunday, and 4 hours on Monday, from April through October.

RAIL-TRAILS

The Upper Mon has access to more than 70 miles of public trails created from abandoned rail lines. All are open for non-motorized use, primarily walking, cycling, jogging, and cross-country skiing.

The Green River Trail follows the Mon in Greene County, PA. It is 5.2 miles from Ten Mile Creek to Crucible, a mining site. The surface is smooth, crushed limestone. More information at the Greene County Recreation Department, 724-852-5323 or www.co.greene.pa.us.

The Mon River Trail follows the Mon for 29 miles from Pricketts Fort near Fairmont, WV to the PA state line. It has a smooth, crushed limestone surface except in Morgantown, where it is paved and ready for roller-blading. The Morgantown part is called the Caperton Trail. More information at the Mon River Trails Conservancy (MRTC) website: www.montrails.org.

The Deckers Creek Trail runs along a scenic tributary to the Mon for 19 miles. The whitewater in its steep gorge is known to kayakers across the Eastern United States. Contact MRTC for more information.

The West Fork River Trail follows the West Fork River for 15 miles on a paved or crushed stone limestone surface. Information at the Marion County Parks and Recreation Commission, 304-363-7037 or www.mcparc.com.

The Marion County Trail can be accessed at Pricketts Fort State Park. It includes a lighted tunnel and a picturesque bridge over the Mon. More information at www.mcparc.com.

HISTORY

Native Americans occupied the lands of the Monongahela from about 8000 B.C. to about 1700 A.D. Shawnee, Mingo, and other tribes claimed and used the region as a hunting ground. Indian traders and pioneers from colonial settlements came to the Upper Mon as early as 1694, when a small temporary settlement grew near present-day Rivesville. Hostile tribes destroyed attempts at permanent settlements, such as those at Dunkard Creek (1757) and at Deckers Creek (1758). The first permanent settlements came shortly after the close of the French and Indian War (1763), but forts were still necessary for protection. Pricketts Fort, just north of Rivesville and accessible from the Mon, is a reconstruction of such a fort.

Navigation on the river began with canoes and bateaux, but as settlements along the Mon grew, pioneers needed a means to send goods down-river to Pittsburgh and ports in the south. At first, they built flatboats, which could only go down river. Later keelboats were built. These vessels traveled both down and up the river. Old Monongahela Rye Whiskey was one of the area's principal early agricultural products exported by way of the Mon using flatboats and keelboats. In 1811, the steamboat New Orleans was launched on the Mon at Pittsburgh, and made the first trip to New Orleans.



In the 1840's, locks were built on the Lower Mon in Pennsylvania, and by 1904 the Corps of Engineers completed eight additional locks and dams in West Virginia, making the Mon the first American river navigable for its entire length. Remnants of early locks can be seen at various locations.

Throughout the years, tow boats have transported coal barges filled with millions of tons of cargo for the steel mills in Pittsburgh, power plants along the Ohio River, and on to New Orleans for international distribution. Cultural aspects of mining are evident. Active and abandoned coal loading docks may be seen from the river. King Coal also left an imprint of acid-mine drainage that has flowed from mines for years. Since implementation of the Clean Water Act in 1972, the waters of the Mon have become cleaner, with communities focusing their gateway development to include riverfront parks.

ECOLOGY

Plants—Much of the riparian zone (the land transition zone along the river) is forested with oak, catalpa, willow, sycamore, cottonwood and other mainly deciduous species.

Birds—In the trees and flying over the river, you may see stately blue and green heron, chattering kingfishers, many types of waterfowl, soaring osprey, hawks, vultures, owls, and an assortment of song birds and darting swallows.

Mammals—The Monongahela is home to beaver, muskrat, whitetail deer, fox, raccoon, and squirrel.

VISITOR AND TOURIST INFORMATION

County and State	Contact
Fayette, PA	Laurel Highlands Visitors Bureau, 120 East Main St., Ligonier, PA 15658. www.laurelhighlands.org 800-333-5661
Greene, PA	Greene County Tourist Promotion Agency, 417 East Roy Furman Highway, Waynesburg, PA 15370 www.greenecountytourism.org 724-627-8687
Monongalia, WV	Greater Morgantown Convention and Visitors Bureau, 68 Donley St. Morgantown, WV 26501 www.tourmorgantown.com 800-458-7373
Marion, WV	Marion County Convention and Visitors Bureau, 110 Adams St. Fairmont, WV 26554. www.marioncvb.com 800-834-7365