

## McConnells Mill State Park



pennsylvania  
DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION  
AND NATURAL RESOURCES



### For More Information Contact:

McConnells Mill State Park  
c/o Moraine State Park  
225 Pleasant Valley Road  
Portersville, PA 16051-9650  
724-368-8811  
e-mail: morainesp@pa.gov  
An Equal Opportunity Employer

[www.visitPAparks.com](http://www.visitPAparks.com)

### Information and Reservations

Make online reservations at:  
[www.visitPAparks.com](http://www.visitPAparks.com) or call toll-free  
888-PA-PARKS (888-727-2757), 7 a.m. to 5 p.m.,  
Monday to Saturday, for state park information  
and reservations.

*Cover photo by Marty Straub*

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Printed on recycled paper

### Nearby Attractions

For information on nearby attractions, contact: Lawrence County Tourist Promotion Agency, 888-284-7599.  
[www.visitlawrencecounty.com](http://www.visitlawrencecounty.com)

**MORAINES STATE PARK:** A few miles to the east on US 422, this large park offers cabins, boating, fishing, swimming, hiking, hunting, bicycling and other outdoor activities.  
724-368-8811

### Access for People with Disabilities

This symbol indicates facilities and activities that are ADA accessible. If you need an accommodation to participate in park activities due to a disability, please contact the park you plan to visit.

### In an Emergency

Contact a park employee or dial 911. For directions to the nearest hospital, look on bulletin boards or at the Old Mill. There is an emergency phone located directly across from Old Mill.

**Nearest Hospital:**  
Jameson Hospital North Campus  
1211 Wilmington Rd  
New Castle, PA 16105  
(724) 658-9001

### Environmental and Historical Education and Interpretation

A park naturalist is available several days a week on a seasonal basis to conduct guided hikes, night programs and school group activities. Please contact Moraine State Park for more information or to schedule a program.

The operational gristmill shows how waterpower was used to ground grains into flour in the days before modern electricity-powered mills. Guided tours of the mill are available Memorial Day through Labor Day and as otherwise posted. Please visit [www.visitPAparks.com](http://www.visitPAparks.com) and select ‘Calendar’ for a complete listing of mill hours, tours and public programs.

#### TRAIL OF GEOLOGY

The natural character of McConnells Mill State Park, including the scenic gorge, waterfalls, rugged hiking trails and whitewater creek, is caused by the geology of the area. The bedrock formed over 300 million years ago as layers of sand, mud and peat in what was a then coastal area. Geologists have found evidence that perhaps after becoming rock, these layers were lifted to the surface in several mountain-building events. The varying strengths of these rocks cause them to erode differently, helping to establish the diverse landscape of the park. The gorge and the dramatic topography of the park were created by glaciers over the past two million years.



### Glacial History

#### GLACIAL HISTORY

The details of the geologic history of the park are still debated today by qualified geologists. However, the following explanation is widely accepted as the story of glacial activity in McConnells Mill.

If you stood at the Cleland Rock Vista (see the map for location and below for a photograph) 200,000 years ago, you would be standing on a ridge at a drainage divide. Water to the north flowed north and water to the south flowed south.

If you stood at the same location about 140,000 years ago, you would be standing at the edge of a small lake dammed by several hundred feet of ice. The ice was the edge of a continental glacier that covered most of North America north of Cleland Rock. The glacier dam created small Lake Prouty by Cleland Rock. To the north was larger Lake Watts (modern Lake Arthur is a small replica of Lake Watts) and further north was giant Lake Edmund.



Eventually Lake Prouty spilled over the ridge near Cleland Rock and began carving Slippery Rock Creek Gorge. As the glacier retreated, Lake Watts drained into the channel, enlarging and deepening the gorge. Lake Edmund swiftly poured into the channel, scouring the gorge to over 400 feet deep. When the glacier finally retreated back to the north, Slippery Rock Creek Gorge was so deep that streams that normally flowed north now flowed south, as the streams do today. The rapid erosion of the gorge created its swift water and exposed the many boulders that offer great challenges to modern whitewater boaters.

The ‘Trail of Geology’ brochure is available at the Moraine and McConnells Mill state park offices.

### Protect and Preserve Our Parks

Please make your visit safe and enjoyable. Obey all posted rules and regulations and respect fellow visitors and the resources of the park.

- Be prepared and bring the proper equipment. Natural areas may possess hazards. Your personal safety and that of your family are your responsibility.
- Hikers: for your safety, please stay on trails.
- Alcoholic beverages are prohibited.
- Uncontrolled pets may chase wildlife or frighten visitors. Pets must be controlled and attended at all times and on a leash or otherwise safely restrained.
- Firewood Advisory: Firewood may contain non-native insects and plant diseases. Bringing firewood into the park from other areas may accidentally spread pest insects and diseases that

threaten park resources and the health of our forests. Campers should use local firewood. Do not take wood home and do not leave firewood – burn it!

- Please do not pick wildflowers.
- Do your part to keep wildlife wild! Enjoy wildlife from a safe distance and do not feed or approach wild animals.
- Please park only in designated areas and obey all traffic regulations.
- Prevent forest fires by having a fire in proper facilities and properly disposing of hot coals. Do not leave a fire unattended.
- Please recycle. Place trash accumulated during your stay in proper receptacles, or take it home with you.

### Recreational Opportunities

**PICNICKING:** The Kildoo Picnic Area is adjacent to the parking area at the northern end of the gorge near the Old Mill. A steep trail leads down to the Old Mill. Charcoal grills and restrooms are available. Alcoholic beverages are prohibited. Located in the Kildoo Picnic Area, the ADA accessible Kildoo Pavilion can accommodate up to 40 people. It can be reserved up to 11 months in advance for a fee. If unreserved, the pavilion is available on a first-come, first-served basis.

A playfield is across the road from the Kildoo Picnic Area. This field may be used for softball and other activities during the summer and for sledding during the winter months.

**CLIMBING AND RAPPELLING:** Two climbing and rappelling areas are available to properly equipped and experienced climbers. The Rim Road Climbing Area is across the creek from the Old Mill. The more advanced and rugged area is in the vicinity of Breakneck Bridge.

Numerous accidents have occurred in this area resulting in serious injuries. Please exercise extreme caution when climbing or hiking in these areas.

Climbing and rappelling is prohibited from the bridges, rock areas along park roads, dams or any other areas outside of the two designated climbing areas.

**NO SWIMMING!** Slippery Rock Creek is a very swift and dangerous whitewater creek. Many people have drowned in this dangerous creek. For swimming opportunities, please visit nearby Moraine State Park, which has two swimming beaches.

**HUNTING AND FIREARMS:** Many acres are open to hunting, trapping and the training of dogs during established seasons. Common game species are grouse, deer, turkey, rabbit and squirrel.

Hunting woodchucks, also known as groundhogs, is prohibited. Dog training is only permitted from the day following Labor Day through March 31 in designated hunting areas. The Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and the Pennsylvania Game Commission rules and regulations apply. Contact the park office for ADA accessible hunting information.

Use **extreme caution** with firearms at all times. Other visitors use the park during hunting seasons. Firearms and archery equipment used for hunting may be uncased and ready for use only in authorized hunting areas during hunting seasons. In areas not open to hunting or during

### Whitewater Boating



Slippery Rock Creek is a Class II to IV river, depending on water level. Spring and fall are the best times for boating. Boaters generally start from Rose Point (US 422 bridge), outside of the park boundary, and boat to Eckert Bridge, covering two and a half miles with a portage around the dam at the Old Mill. It is illegal to boat over the dam. Boaters must stay at least 50 feet from the boil at the base of the dam. An additional three and a half miles of whitewater from Eckert Bridge to Harris Bridge can extend the run for boaters to six miles. Rafts, canoes and kayaks are not available for rent in the park.

All whitewater boaters on Slippery Rock Creek must learn to recognize natural dangers and understand that injury and death are a possibility when boating Slippery Rock Creek.

Only those with the proper equipment, training and experience should consider whitewater boating. Whitewater boating is permitted in rubber rafts, whitewater canoes and kayaks. Rafts must be at least eight feet long and have at least two air chambers in the gunnels with a minimum outside diameter tube of 14 inches. Non-inflatable canoes and kayaks must be of a design intended for whitewater use. Boating must be in accordance with the American Whitewater Affiliation Safety Code. All boaters enter the water at their own risk. Inner tubes and air mattresses are prohibited.

All boaters must wear U.S. Coast Guard approved personal flotation devices at all times. Helmets are strongly recommended.

non-hunting seasons, firearms and archery equipment shall be kept in the owner’s car, trailer or leased campsite. The only exception is that law enforcement officers and individuals with a valid *Pennsylvania License to Carry Firearms* may carry said firearm concealed on their person while they are in the park.



**FISHING:** Fishing is permitted anywhere along Slippery Rock Creek with the exception of the dam structures. The best fishing is for trout and bass. Trout are stocked several times throughout the season. There is a fly fishing only, catch and release area by Armstrong Bridge. Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission rules and regulations apply.

#### International Scale of River Difficulty

The classes below are the American version of the rating system used throughout the world. This system is not exact. Rivers do not always fit easily into one category and there may be regional interpretations. This information is from American Whitewater.

**Class I: Easy**—Fast-moving water with riffles and small waves. Few obstructions, all obvious and easily missed with little training. Self-rescue is easy.

**Class II: Novice**—Straightforward rapids with wide, clear channels which are evident without scouting. Occasional maneuvering may be required, but rocks and medium-sized waves are easily missed by trained paddlers.

**Class III: Intermediate**—Rapids with moderate, irregular waves which may be difficult to avoid and which can swamp an open canoe. Complex maneuvers in fast current and good boat control in tight passages or around ledges is often required. Strong eddies and powerful current effects can occur.

**Class IV: Advanced**—Intense, powerful but predictable rapids requiring precise boat handling in turbulent water. May be large, unavoidable waves and holes or constricted passages demanding fast maneuvers under pressure. Rapids require “must” moves above dangerous hazards. Self-rescue is difficult.



## McConnells Mill State Park

Located in Lawrence County, McConnells Mill State Park encompasses 2,546 acres of the spectacular Slippery Rock Creek Gorge, a National Natural Landmark. Created by the draining of glacial lakes thousands of years ago, the gorge has steep sides with huge boulders littering the valley floor. Visitors can tour a historic gristmill and covered bridge that date to the 1800s and get a closer view of the powerful water that continues to carve out the valley. Popular activities are hiking, whitewater kayaking, rock climbing, picnicking, and exploring the scenic overlooks, forests and waterfalls of the park. The park is open from sunrise to sunset, year-round.



### Directions

The park is about 40 miles north of Pittsburgh, via I-79. From US 422 west, the park entrance is on the left less than ½ mile from the intersection of PA 19 and US 422. The park is located at 1761 McConnells Mill Road, Portersville, PA 16051.

### Danger: Whitewater – Slippery Rocks

Visitors entering McConnells Mill State Park should be aware of the natural hazards and steep terrain of the Slippery Rock Creek Gorge. This area contains smooth rocks that are often damp and slippery, and varying degrees of whitewater conditions, including deep pools, rapids and swift currents. Adults should closely supervise children at all times. Visitors must be aware of these features and exercise caution. Numerous accidents here have resulted in injury and death.

**Please exercise extreme caution and stay on trails.**

### History

#### HISTORY OF THE OLD MILL

In 1852, Daniel Kennedy built the first gristmill on Slippery Rock Creek. After fire destroyed the mill, he rebuilt it in 1868. Thomas McConnell bought the mill in 1875 and improved it by replacing the waterwheel with water turbines and the grinding stones with rolling mills. One of the first rolling mills in the country, it processed wheat, buckwheat, corn, and oats for local customers. At one time this building was the hub of the community, grinding the grain that put fresh baked bread on every dinner table. Sagging profits and antiquated equipment closed the mill in 1928.

In 1946, the mill and surrounding property was conveyed from Thomas H. Hartman to the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy and later to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania with the wish that it be preserved for future generations. McConnells Mill State Park was formally dedicated in October of 1957.



#### MCCONNELLS MILL COVERED BRIDGE

One of two covered bridges in Lawrence County, it was built in 1874 and is of Howe Truss design. A registered National Historic Landmark, the bridge is on state park land but is the property of Lawrence County.

