



News for Immediate Release

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Swatara State Park Targeted for Trail Installation, Other Improvements

Harrisburg – A long-awaited construction project that will see trails, parking areas and bridges installed at Swatara State Park in Lebanon and Schuylkill counties is now underway, the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources said today.

“Long identified as ‘undeveloped,’ this gem of a state park comprised of woodlands and meadows straddling Swatara Creek is targeted for the type of improvements its visitors have requested,” said DCNR Secretary Richard Allan. “Planned facility and infrastructure improvements will support and enhance day-use recreation that already includes canoeing, fishing, hiking, picnicking and bicycling.”

Work will include installation of 10 miles of crushed stone trails along an existing railway bed and a portion of abandoned Old State Road. A new trail and bridge near Sand Siding Road will connect the former rail bed and roadway. Another bridge will span Mill Creek on the rail trail.

Four new trailheads, or parking areas, also are planned, affording easy access to the trails and launch areas for canoeing and kayaking.

Financed through state capital budget funds, the \$4.67 million project undertaken by Kinsley Construction of York County is expected to be completed by mid-July.

State acquisition of lands that were to become Swatara State Park began in 1971 and was completed in 1987. Totaling 3,520 acres, the state park was subject of numerous surveys, environmental assessments, Bureau of State Parks research efforts, and governmental and user-group committee studies. The input shaped the park’s future and best utilizes its recreational potential.

“With its increased network of trails and access to Swatara Creek launching areas, we see park visitation growing significantly,” Allan said. “We know more than 84,000 visitors came last year to float and fish its waters and hike and bike its scenic woodlands.”

Park visitors are advised construction work may affect access to certain areas. Closings may be required along Old State Road/Bear Hole Trail, Rail Trail, the Lickdale Spur, and the boat launch near Swopes Valley Road. Mountain bike trails, the Appalachian Trail, and Waterville Bridge will remain open, as will sections of the rail trail. The Swatara Water Trail will require portage around bridge construction.

Updated information can be obtained by contacting Memorial Lake State Park Office, 717-865-6470; or by email at memorialsp@pa.gov.

Most of Swatara State Park is located along Interstate 81 between Second and Blue mountains. An 8-mile stretch of the Swatara Creek Water Trail winds through the park, and two miles of the Appalachian Trail, which stretches from Georgia to Maine, cross its southern sector.

Part of the Memorial Lake State Park Complex, Swatara Creek is a popular destination for canoeing, kayaking, and tubing enthusiasts, especially in the spring. Designated launches in the northern and southern ends of the park provide access to the creek for boaters.

For more information on Swatara and Pennsylvania's other 119 state parks, visit www.dcnr.state.pa.us (select "Find a Park").

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