



Pennsylvania Fishing and Boating Access Strategy 2026



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Background

Pennsylvania is rich with aquatic resources and outdoor opportunities. The Commonwealth's more than 85,000 miles of rivers and streams and nearly 4,000 lakes, reservoirs, and ponds provide seemingly endless opportunities for water-based recreation. Opportunities range from wading and swimming, to paddling and fishing, to powered boating activities, including boat-towed watersports. Being close to water complements activities such as hiking, running, picnicking, bicycling, and nature viewing, by bringing a sense of calm and rejuvenation.

According to the [Outdoor Recreation Access Needs Maps](#) included in [Pennsylvania's Outdoor Recreation Plan](#), 2020–2024, 61% of the Commonwealth's population lives within a 10-minute drive of a recreational water access area. The 1,125 publicly accessible areas are owned and/or managed by a range of entities, including state agencies such as the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC), Pennsylvania Game Commission (PGC), and the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR); federal agencies such as the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE); as well as municipalities, land trusts, and other statewide, regional and local partners.

State agencies and partner organizations manage resources for identifying fishing and boating access sites across the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, including:

- [Statewide map of existing access \(Explore PA Waters\)](#)
- [PFBC Map Gallery](#)
- [Pennsylvania Water Trails \(PEC\)](#)

The GIS data for these maps is available through [Pennsylvania Spatial Data Access](#) (PASDA).

The focus of this access strategy is on recreational water access. Recreational water access sites offer a variety of different experiences for walk-in fishing and powered and unpowered boating, with formal public access guaranteed by public ownership, long-term lease, or easement. They provide a range of experiences from very limited facilities—known as rustic access areas—to fully enhanced areas with a variety of amenities. State agencies, municipalities, local communities, and non-profits can improve existing facilities or develop new access areas to accommodate growing populations and increasing demands for access to the Commonwealth's aquatic resources.



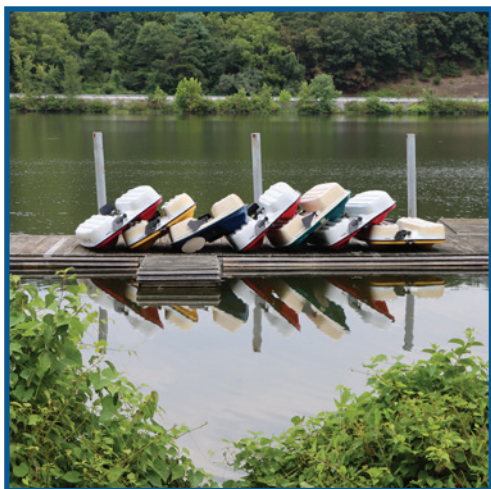
Photo Credit: Friends of the Riverfront

Importance of Access

Meaningfully connecting with natural bodies of water provides both physical and mental health benefits and may lead to improved stewardship of the Commonwealth's aquatic resources. Providing access to waterways promotes more opportunities for communities to experience the benefits of outdoor recreation.

Fishing and boating are extremely popular recreational activities in Pennsylvania. An increasingly diverse population is looking for proximal access to our waterways. [Polls conducted by DCNR for the 2025–2029 PA Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan](#) indicate record

levels of interest in kayaking and canoeing. Still, many residents and visitors encounter barriers, from physical and financial challenges to social and psychological obstacles, that may prevent them from using and benefiting from existing access areas. Overcoming these obstacles and investing in fishing and boating access is vital for environmental stewardship, public health, and community well-being. This access strategy is intended to provide resources and tools to address such challenges and bring a consistent statewide approach to developing new access areas and enhancing existing areas.



According to the 2024 Lion Poll,¹ most Pennsylvanians believe they have easy access to natural bodies of water. However, perceptions of accessibility vary significantly among demographic groups, indicating inequities in access to fishing and boating. For example:

- Pennsylvanians of Hispanic or Latino descent were more likely to note the inaccessibility of local waterways for boating and fishing opportunities where they live than other ethnic groups.
- Individuals living in the Philadelphia region were more likely than those living elsewhere in Pennsylvania to agree that fishing and boating access opportunities are not accessible.

Fishing and boating make a significant contribution to local, state, and national economies. In 2024, the outdoor industry delivered \$20.4 billion of value to Pennsylvania's Gross Domestic Product (GDP)², making up 2% of the State's GDP. Boating and fishing specifically added over \$900 million of value to the state's economy. According to the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, fishing supports over 32,000 jobs and contributes \$5.7 billion annually and boating generates \$4.5 billion and supports over 16,300 jobs, according to the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis.



According to a 2024 public survey completed by DCNR's Statewide Outdoor Recreation Planning process³, one-third of people who participate in fishing and boating spend over \$5,000 a year on related purchases such as clothing, equipment, transportation, lodging, passes, events, and registrations.

¹A statistically representative sample of Pennsylvanians conducted by Penn State Harrisburg's Center for Survey Research.

²According to data released by the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis ([Pennsylvania2024.pdf](#))

³A non-statistically representative survey open to the public where respondents self-selected their engagement and shared the survey with their own contacts.

The [American Sportfishing Association](#) (ASA) reports that statewide contributions by anglers in Pennsylvania exceeded \$4.2 billion in economic output and supported 32,280 jobs in 2025.

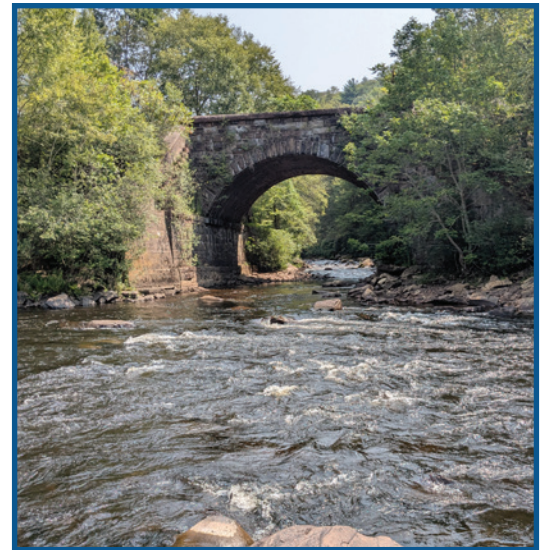
The [National Marine Manufacturers Association](#) (NMMA) estimates that recreational boating had a \$4.5 billion economic impact on Pennsylvania's economy, based on 2023 data. The NMMA also reports that recreational boating in Pennsylvania supports 16,309 jobs.

These data show that supporting public interest in water-based recreation offers the Commonwealth more than health, conservation, and social benefits. Fishing, boating, and other forms of water-based recreation stimulate economic benefits to local communities.

Access Strategy Overview

The Pennsylvania Fishing and Boating Access Strategy will assist state and local governments, and partner organizations in connecting communities to their water resources through the development of public access areas to further create outdoor recreation opportunities. Differing from the 2010 Access Strategy by PFBC and DCNR, this new Access Strategy seeks to take a more qualitative approach to determining new access areas (or improving those that already exist) to enhance fishing and boating throughout the state.

This strategy provides tools and resources for natural resource managers and local communities to identify existing public access for recreational fishing and boating in Pennsylvania and implement improvements at these sites.



For the purpose of this strategy, access is defined in the following manner:

Boating access provides facilities for launch and retrieval of powered and unpowered boats with some level of improvements, to include parking. Boating access is typically at a designated point of entry along a waterway. Fishing can also occur at these sites; however, the primary purpose is boating.

Walk-in fishing access provides a way for anglers to reach the waterway and/or walk for some distance along the stream bank or in the stream bed. These types of access areas may have few amenities and may not include boating access.

Water access sites vary in size, context and amenities, offering a wide range of experiences. Sites may be characterized as rustic, enhanced, or developed, depending on designed features or use. Further details are available in the Types of Fishing and Boating Access Areas segment of this Strategy.



Strategy for Providing and Improving Access

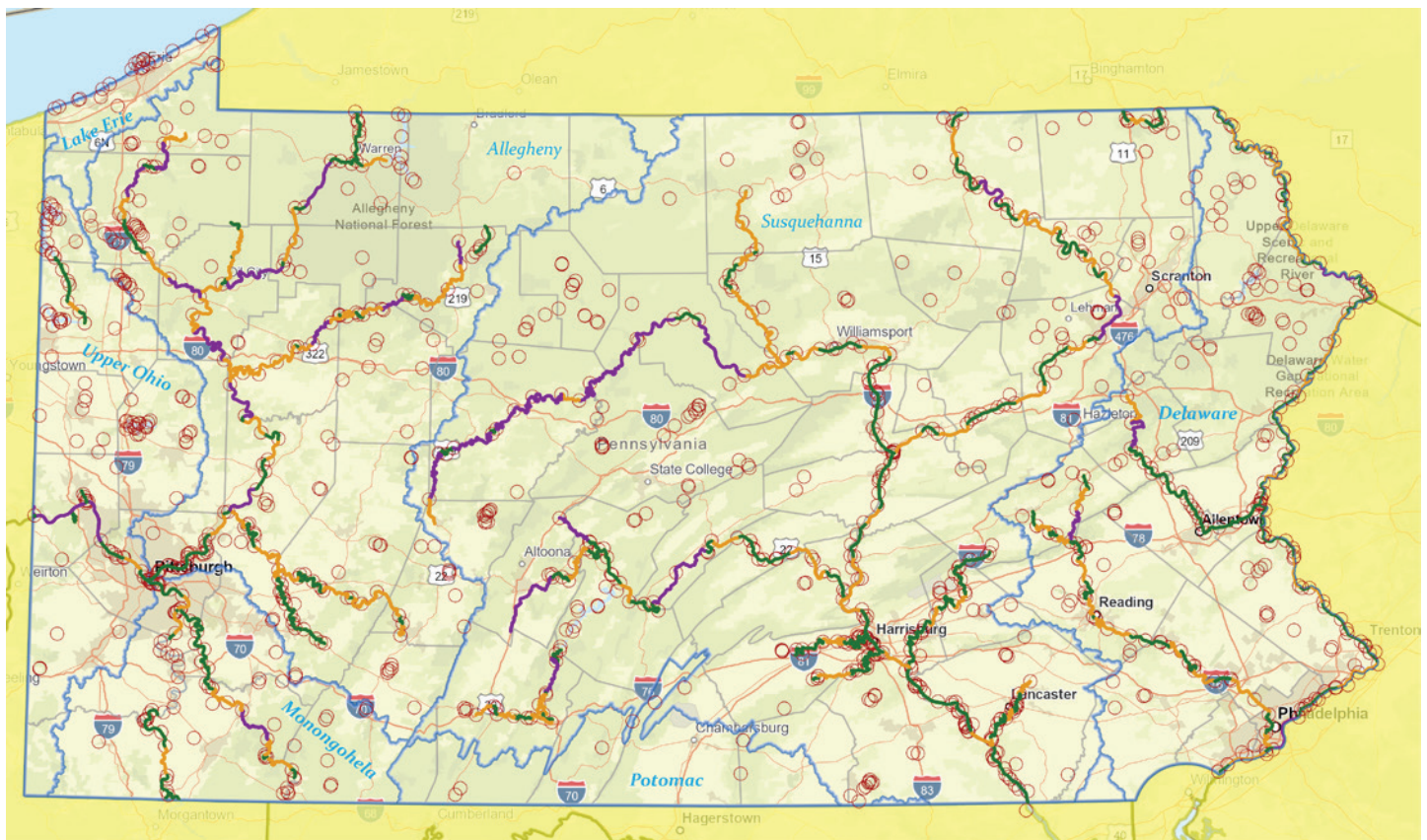
The National Park Service's Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program (NPS-RTCA), in partnership with American Whitewater (AW), and the River Management Society (RMS), prepared a comprehensive guide on access planning. [The River Access Planning Guide: A Decision Making Framework for Enhancing River Access](#) provides an overview of the process for enhancing waterway access and offers assessment guides to help practitioners identify appropriate solutions for their situation. This document serves as a valuable resource for anyone considering a project to develop new or enhance current water access. The Pennsylvania Fishing and Boating Access Strategy aims to complement this document by offering a list of considerations for access improvements that are more specific to the conditions and development process in Pennsylvania. Primary considerations are detailed below.

- Optimize access area placement
- Enhance current public access
- Prioritize under-resourced communities and areas with limited access
- Maximize accessibility for all users
- Assess site suitability
- Build project support
- Focus on established water trails first

Optimize Access Area Placement

One consideration in the development of fishing and boating access is the distance between access areas. Distance can be measured across the water and via the road network for most fishing and boating access areas. Distance between walk-in fishing access areas can also be measured via trails.

Maps are useful for identifying existing access areas and gaps in statewide or regional fishing and boating networks. This toolkit includes a static statewide map of fishing and boating access areas and a web-based [Water Trail Access Gap map](#) that highlights the distances between access points on [state-designated water trails](#). High-need areas for water-based recreational access are identified based on driving time over road networks, with the goal of providing every Pennsylvanian with a water access point within a 10-minute drive.



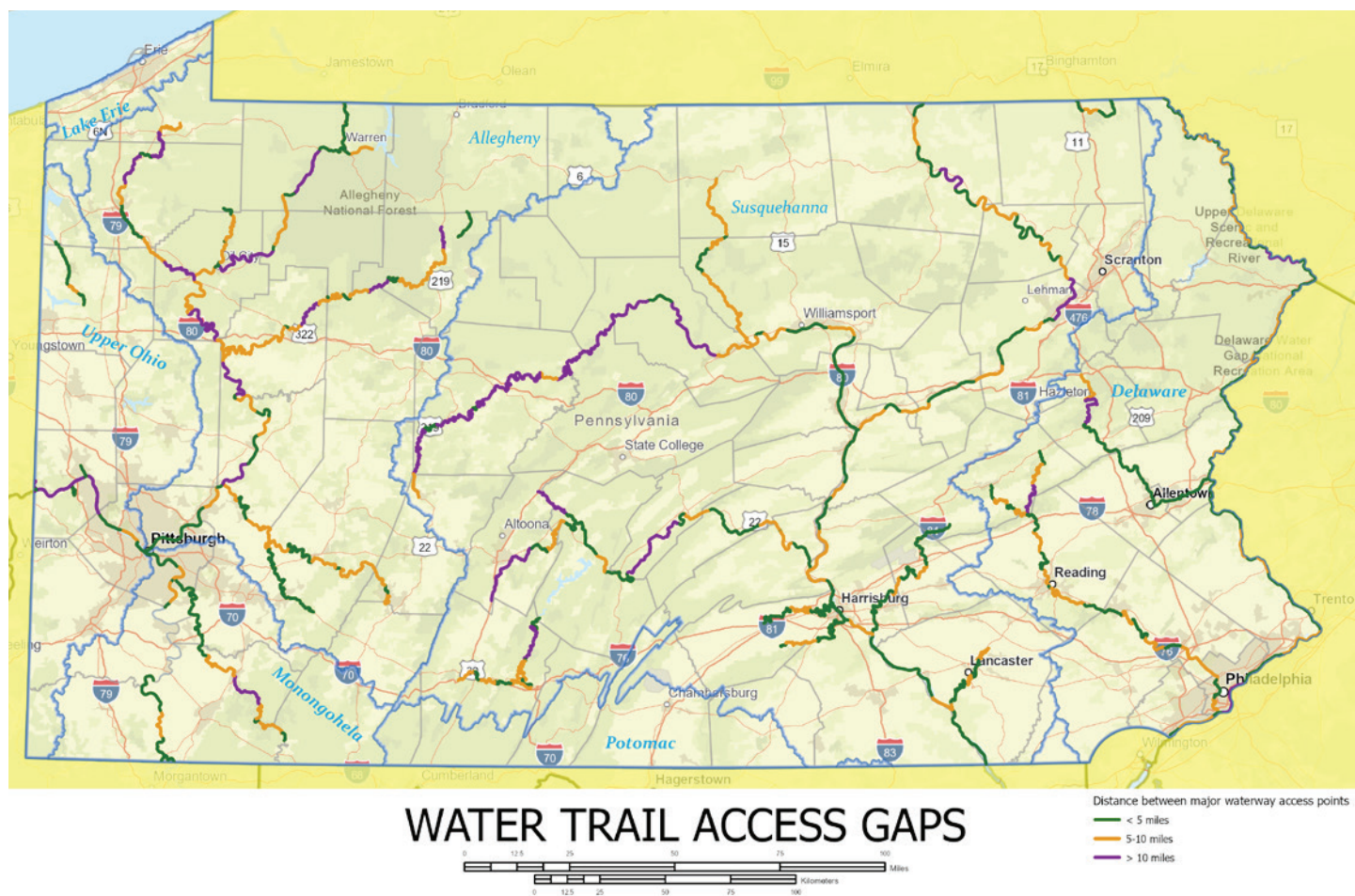
PUBLIC WATERWAY ACCESS POINTS



Distance between major waterway access points

- < 5 miles
- 5-10 miles
- > 10 miles
- Access points to public waterways

The Water Trail Access Gaps map is an example of an analysis that can be replicated for any waterway or within any planning region. The map highlights water segments with distances less than 5 miles between accesses, 5–10 miles between accesses, and segments with greater than 10 miles between access areas. While statewide mapping provides an initial view of distances between existing access areas, further analysis of local conditions is needed to determine whether a particular segment should be considered a priority gap. These priority gaps are locations where adding new access points within the water trail network should be evaluated.



Variable Distances

Variable distances between access areas provide diverse recreation experiences for people with differing interests and abilities.

First-time paddlers may prefer access areas that are closer together, while skilled paddlers may seek to paddle longer distances between areas. Travel time between boating access areas depends on the boat's speed and is influenced by the type of watercraft, water conditions (such as tides, flow, and current), weather and wind, and the boater's skill level.

- Two to six miles per hour is a typical paddling pace depending on several factors such as current, wind, physical ability, watercraft, and obstructions.
- The typical distance for a day-long paddle varies, but 12 miles per day is generally used for planning purposes.

Local Data

Review local data sources to gauge appropriate distance between access areas on a given waterbody.

- Stream gauge data can be used to determine typical base flow and seasonal variations by accessing the [Water Resources of the United States—National Water Information System \(NWIS\) Mapper](#).
- Hazards such as dams, utilities and other obstructions can impact the ability to establish a set distance between access areas. Establishing well- marked take-out points upstream of dams in conjunction with access areas downstream of dams creates portage opportunities that make water trails safe and enjoyable to navigate. For more information on how to safely navigate around dams and other potential hazards, see this PFBC webpage about [Hazards on the Water](#).

Emergency Response

Consult with local emergency response and water rescue teams to ensure that newly created or enhanced access areas also serve the needs of local emergency response organizations as much as possible. Emergency responders may have important insights into the location of new access and the technical or design elements at the site that would facilitate efficient emergency response such as launching/retrieval of water rescue boats, water withdraws for fire suppression, or access to hazardous features on a waterway. The site may be able to fill a current need in the response system. Since emergency response entities, capacities, and facilities are very localized in Pennsylvania, the best way to consider these factors is to engage local emergency response leaders early in the site design process.

To implement the Access Strategy, PFBC and DCNR works with local governments and partner organizations such as Heritage Areas, Conservation Landscapes, watershed organizations, and greenway and trail networks that often act as water trail managers. to prioritize improvements and develop new fishing and boating access areas. Agencies may offer funding and technical assistance for the development of access management plans and master site development plans as well as for the rehabilitation and development of access areas.

Communities that are interested in developing or updating local access management plans are encouraged to contact the [DCNR Bureau of Recreation and Conservation](#) (view [Regional Advisor contact information](#)) or [email the PFBC](#) about their [Boating Facility Grants program](#).

Tools

- [PFBC Map Gallery](#)
- [GIS data available on PASDA DCNR PASDA layers:](#)
- [Explore PA trails - Trails \(points\)](#)
- [Explore PA trails - Water Trails PFBC PASDA layers:](#)
- [Access Areas \(Fishing and Boating\)](#)
- [PA Water Trails](#)

Enhancing Current Public Access

To determine where new access areas should be located and which existing areas could be enhanced, it's important to have a detailed understanding of all current access areas. While conducting an access inventory, data collectors should consider the following questions:

- Where are current access areas located? What is the distance between current access areas? Are access areas available at variable distances to provide a variety of experiences? Consider whether any large gaps should be prioritized for new access.
- What types of areas currently exist?
- What amenities are available that facilitate access for anglers and boaters of all abilities? Could improvements to the existing areas enhance accessibility? Are areas located along the waterway at distances that are conducive for anglers and boaters of all abilities?
- Are there any existing sites that are overly crowded? Do existing sites have adequate capacity (including parking) to serve additional user groups if amenities are enhanced?
- Are there any sites where natural resources are being negatively impacted by recreational use? Improvements at these sites should be prioritized to minimize ecological damage.
- Which existing sites identified for enhancement would serve the greatest number of users, benefit under-resourced communities, or improve accessibility for user groups?
- Are there existing parks, public lands or trail easements adjacent to the waterway that can be improved or expanded to provide access for fishing and boating? Corridors of public access can be advantageous for boaters and stream anglers, in particular.

There are several survey tools and approaches for local communities to use when conducting an inventory of access area amenities. Examples of inventories are available here:

- [Template Access Area Inspection Sheet](#)
- [Schuylkill River Water Trail interactive map](#)
- [Access Project Priorities along the Schuylkill River Water Trail](#)
- [Three Rivers Water Trail Management Plan](#)
- [The Susquehanna Greenway Partnership ADA and Universal Accessibility Access Study \(Lower West Branch Susquehanna River\)](#)

Tools

Current public water access points: [Data Summary](#)

Local Parks: [Data Summary](#)

Prioritize Under-Resourced Communities and Areas with Limited Access

Another factor that can guide the prioritization of new water access site locations is the degree of need for access. This approach focuses on a geographic area and elevates specific portions of the water corridor that are determined to be “high need” as priority investment areas. Since there are many valid criteria and thresholds that could be used to determine if an area is “high need,” it is important that the planning/implementation team agree on the assessment strategy. Some common criteria used to determine the level of need are:



Photo Credit: Friends of the Riverfront

Distance between current access points:

Consider the characteristics of the waterway and the type of user experience that is most appropriate for this waterway. Are there enough access points along the waterway to allow for diverse trip lengths and experiences? Are the stretches without access long enough to adequately accommodate fishing, wildlife viewing, or other recreation activities where calm, undisturbed stretches of water are advantageous? Do long distances between access points create gaps for emergency service providers?

Availability of access close to home:

Can residents get to a public access point within a reasonable amount of time? A [needs analysis](#) completed by the Trust for Public Lands, in coordination with DCNR, considered a 10-minute drive as a standard distance to aim for when providing public access to waterways. Providing access to the water for recreation purposes may take a different shape in each community depending on local demographics, transportation networks, terrain, and recreation partners.

In communities where car ownership is low, recreation providers may also evaluate other ways to connect residents to access points such as public transportation routes, bikeshare programs, or the promotion of ride services. For some communities, the most effective method of connecting residents to the water is not based on transportation opportunities but rather on strategic partnerships providing robust recreation programming that includes convenient transportation, instruction, and equipment rental.

Population:

Is the population of the area far larger than the reasonable carrying capacity of current public access points? If so, additional access areas may be needed to prevent overcrowding, user conflicts, and degradation of natural resources. Recreation providers may also consider prioritizing access within underserved communities to reduce real or perceived barriers to water recreation opportunities.

Number of active users:

Does the local area include a high number of water enthusiasts, suggesting that more public access may be necessary to accommodate the level of use? Planners can use data such as fishing license sales, boat launch permits, boat registrations, user surveys, interviews with local fishing guides and boat rental businesses, observations, and fitness apps to determine the number of active users in the local community.



Adaptive Facilities:

Are there access areas where people of different abilities can recreate on the waterway? Providing enhanced areas for fishing and boating allows easy access for most visitors. However, adaptive access points are necessary to provide true independence for enthusiasts of all abilities. Adaptive water access facilities include specific features, such as kayak chutes, boarding benches, overhead grab bars, toe kicks around the dock, and variable height railing, to allow those with a variety of mobility restrictions to recreate more independently. Including these features at a water access area allows individuals to transfer into a boat on their own or enjoy fishing with fewer safety concerns. Are the adaptive access points offered in pairs or in series so that a user can travel from one access point to the next on water? Even if an adaptive access pair isn't possible, it is worthwhile to provide an adaptive access option in each community. Stand-alone adaptive access points on lakes provide a good alternative when an adaptive access pair on moving water is not feasible.

Presence of prime recreation conditions:

Is the local waterway regularly stocked with trout or known to provide high-quality fishing habitat? Is the local waterway part of a designated water trail, frequented by local outfitters or recreation groups, or part of an annual paddling sojourn? How much does the changing of the seasons affect fishing or boating conditions along the waterway?

Site assessment and local knowledge:

When you travel the waterway corridor, is there visual evidence that people are using certain areas for recreation purposes? Do local stakeholders know of areas that are not currently formal public access areas where community members access the waterway? Are nearby public access areas crowded or overused, suggesting that more access opportunities are needed? Does the waterway usually contain sufficient water to produce recreation for six to nine months each year?



Photo Credit: Riverlife



Photo Credit: Pennsylvania Environmental Council



Maximize Accessibility for All Users

Recreation managers aim to maximize opportunities for public access. Accessibility generally follows two broad concepts—Accessible Water Access or Adaptive Water Access. The goal when designing Accessible areas is to reduce or remove physical barriers to the water so that primary recreation facilities are reachable by the majority of users, including those with minor physical limitations. As a result, areas designed to be accessible typically exhibit designated pedestrian walkways with little to no slope and handrails accompanying slightly steeper terrain, along with accessible parking. Adaptive areas offer additional features that allow users with mobility limitations

to access the site with more independence. These areas typically include infrastructure and architectural elements, like launches outfitted with tiered benches, railing systems, overhead grab bars, and dock-side stabilizers, that allow individuals to transfer, stabilize, and move on and off the water with little to no outside assistance. While these adaptive elements lead to a more costly project than simpler accessibility approaches, they are preferred over accessible sites, if possible. Adaptive areas accommodate the full breadth of users and provide a more user-friendly experience for everyone. To maximize inclusivity, it is recommended that adaptive sites are planned and installed in pairs. This way a user needing the extra support provided by adaptive launches, can put-in the water at one site and take-out independently at another site a reasonable distance downstream. Adaptive launches are also commonly installed at lakes since a user could easily put-in and take-out from the same site.

Best Practices for Accessibility

- **Pathways:** Firm, stable, and slip-resistant; mowed or alternative walkways
- **Signage:** Clear informational signs
- **Slopes:** Keep under 5% where possible; never exceed 8%
- **Handrails:** Provide where needed for safety and support
- **Path Width:** Minimum of 4 feet
- **Rest Areas:** Benches or seating at regular intervals
- **Equivalent Experiences:** Ensure users of all abilities can enjoy the site
- **Facilities:** ADA-accessible restrooms, parking, and other amenities
- **Put-ins & Take-outs:** Create accessible access areas in logical sequences or clustered for connectivity



Photo Credit: BoardSafe

In Pennsylvania, publicly funded projects must adhere to the [2010 Americans with Disabilities Act \(ADA\) Standards for Accessible Design](#). These standards include specific guidance for elements of recreational boating facilities, fishing piers and platforms, including boat boarding docks, gangways and marinas. Public funding criteria also prioritize projects that implement best practices for accessibility in addition to the 2010 Standards. Guidance from NPS and RMS state the following:

“The launch area is only part of an accessible site: also consider parking spaces, pathways, and restroom facilities so that they are accessible to all.”⁴

While providing public access sites that are accessible or adaptive is ideal for inclusivity, it is not always viable, or suitable, when other factors are considered. It is important to balance accessibility with other factors such as the impact that the built environment has on natural resources, the maintenance and management needs of the site infrastructure, local ordinances, and the provision of diverse experiences. In the case of water access, one size does not fit all. Each site should be analyzed to determine its appropriate access solution (further details available in the [Suitability of Area](#) portion of this strategy).



Photo Credit: Friends of the Riverfront

Furthermore, recreation managers should consider all access areas along a waterway or within a region as a network of access points, and plan for a diversity of experiences within that network. Each area may offer a different level of accessibility that is appropriate for its context. By planning at a network level, users can be offered a variety of recreation experiences while still ensuring recreation opportunities for all abilities.



Photo Credit: BoardSafe

When it is not feasible to develop adaptive facilities or incorporate all ADA Standards, site designers should include best practices for accessibility as much as possible to make the area as user-friendly as possible given its context. Consider the common types of fishing and boating access areas, as detailed below, when determining the most appropriate level of development for a specific property.

⁴See pages 79 – 81 in [Prepare to Launch, National Park Service and River Management Society, 2018](#)

Types of Fishing and Boating Access Areas

Like many recreational facilities, water access sites vary in size, context and amenities, offering a wide range of experiences. Common types of access areas in Pennsylvania are described below.

Characteristics of Rustic Access Areas

Rustic access areas elevate the priorities of preserving natural resources and providing a scenic experience. They are less developed which reduces the complexity of design and costs associated with implementing and maintaining the access point. Key features are below:

- Offers a wilderness-type experience, emphasizing a connection with nature.
- Designed with minimal environmental impact, featuring low construction and infrastructure costs.
- Primarily caters to specific recreational activities, such as walk-in fishing or carry-in watercraft.
- The launch or access area is typically the only facility on site; however, it is sometimes paired with pit toilets and campsites where overnight camping is permitted.
- Parking is usually limited to gravel or pull-off areas.
- Reasonable attempts may be made to implement best practices to enhance accessibility.
- May be the preferred access option because of safety concerns, local ordinances, or specific permitting requirements.



Photo Credit: French Creek Valley Conservancy

Characteristics of Enhanced Access Areas

Enhanced access areas offer modest built facilities and infrastructure to support the use of the site for recreation, while maintaining many of the site's natural characteristics. This type of site provides a balance between improving access for recreation and minimizing ecological impact.

- Offers a natural experience with added amenities to accommodate a wider range of users.
- Moderately engineered to balance recreational access while protecting natural resources.
- Involves moderate to high construction costs due to additional infrastructure and engineering.
- May include traditional restrooms or low-impact pit, vault, or portable toilets.
- Launch areas and paths between amenities typically meet ADA standards and implement best practices where applicable, though exceptions may apply due to local ordinances, Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) permit guidelines, or safety concerns. In such cases, efforts are made to balance accessibility with utility and ecological sensitivity.



Photo Credit: Susquehanna Greenway Partnership

Characteristics of Developed Access Areas

Developed access areas prioritize access for all, and as result, are highly engineered sites with significant recreation facilities and infrastructure to allow for safe use by many user groups with varying abilities.

- Offers a user-friendly experience and modern conveniences for all boaters and anglers, including those new to the activity and those requiring mobility assistance.
- Heavily engineered to withstand weather impacts and to handle a higher volume of users.
- Involves higher construction, maintenance and operating costs due to the extensive infrastructure required.
- The launch or access area meets ADA standards with firm, stable, and slip-resistant surfaces. Designers are strongly encouraged to implement inclusive and adaptive design features.
- The launch or access area is accompanied by other user facilities such as defined parking areas, restrooms, pumpout facilities, courtesy dock, playground/park, etc.
- All facilities and walking paths meet ADA standards.



Photo Credit: Friends of the Riverfront

Tools

- [Guide to the ABA Accessibility Standards for Recreational Boating Facilities, US Access Board](#)
- [Logical Lasting Launches, National Park Service, 2004](#)
- [Water and Land Recreation Opportunity Spectrum \(WALROS\), 2011](#)
- [DCNR Accessibility Policy for grant-funded projects](#)



Suitability of Area

Perhaps the most important aspect of water access is aligning the proper use with proper location. The goal for access developers is to offer a variety of experiences for diverse user groups across many access points along a given waterway. Together, these access points offer something for everyone. There are many factors to consider when determining the suitability of a site to support a given activity and level of users. The most common considerations are noted below.

Suitability for Recreation:

Is the waterway suitable for recreational use based on standards outlined in *Keystone Canoeing: A Guide to Canoeable Waters of Eastern Pennsylvania* by Edward Gertler, or on reputable websites such as AmericanWhitewater.org, paddling.com, or kayakguru.com? If necessary, flow data can be obtained from the USGS National Water Dashboard. To determine if your waterway or access area is appropriate for boating, review the guidelines on the [American Canoe Association website](http://AmericanCanoeAssociation.org). Additionally, consideration should be given to whether the waterway is listed as impaired due to elevated bacterial levels on [DEP's impaired waters listing](http://DEP.org).

Watershed organizations, and state or federal agencies can sometimes provide real-time data on bacteria levels for a given waterway, visit the EPA Water Quality Data website.

Is the waterway designated as a Pennsylvania Water Trail? Information on the Pennsylvania Water Trail program, designation of water trails, boundaries of current water trails, and local points of contact are available on the [water trails program website](http://watertrails.org).

How close is the nearest public access? Publicly accessible fishing and boating areas can be found on PFBC's Map Gallery. If public access currently exists in the area, think about how an additional access opportunity may complement the existing access points. Additional areas can help reduce overcrowding at a busy site, offer a pair of ADA-accessible launches, reduce an on-water access gap, or increase safety by providing emergency service professionals with needed water access in multiple locations.



Use:

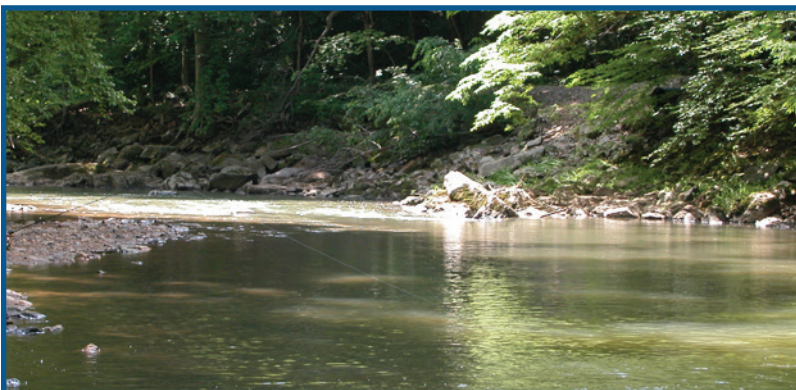
What is the best recreational use of this site? Does the site offer exemplary fish habitat that would make it a great fishing spot? Is the site along a designated water trail that is often used by unpowered boaters? Are there other local areas dedicated to fishing or boating that would make this access area redundant or more attractive as a paired site?

Potential User Conflicts:

Are there existing user conflicts that could be mitigated with an expanded or redesigned access area? Is it possible to safely accommodate multiple user groups at this site? What are the primary needs or activity patterns of each targeted user group? What kind of design considerations, facilities, signage, etc. would be necessary to support multiple groups and mitigate potential user conflicts?

Level of Development:

What level of development will provide optimal recreational accommodations while limiting safety concerns and natural resource impact? Consider the current state of other local sites and aim to offer users a variety of site contexts throughout the waterway. Does the site contribute to a broad waterway-wide strategy to ensure fully ADA accessible sites strategically situated a reasonable distance apart so users who require mobility assistance can complete a full boating trip or frequent a diversity of fishing sites? What level of development does your budget support? Be sure to consider construction, operating and maintenance costs. What funding options exist to support development of the site?



Context Sensitive Design:

The natural condition of the site will offer design restrictions and ultimately contribute to the optimal level of development. Consider the likelihood of flooding and shoreline adjustments due to severe weather events or other natural occurrences. In some cases, local permitting requirements may limit the type of facility, amount of impervious surface, construction materials or ideal use at each site. Similarly, the presence of unique, threatened or endangered plants or animals, or archeological remains or artifacts, may limit disturbance in some areas of the property and guide the design, level of development or final use of the site. A query of the Pennsylvania Natural Diversity Inventory (PNDI) or consultation with the Pennsylvania Historic and Archeological Resource Exchange (PA-SHARE) can help to identify sensitive features that may impact the suitability of a site for recreational use.

Consider all of the above factors when sizing the water access area. Many of these assessments can be done using maps and data from a desktop but should always be verified with a site visit. It is helpful to obtain input from local stakeholders and user groups to enhance the data and maps with a realistic local perspective. Consider both qualitative and quantitative input when planning for improvements to existing sites and development of new sites.

Tools

[Pennsylvania Natural Diversity Inventory \(PNDI\)](#)

[Pennsylvania Historic and Archaeological Resource Exchange \(PA-SHARE\)](#)



Build Project Support

While it's important to identify a project leader or sponsor for a water access project, it's just as important to build a broad group of supporters to help guide early improvements and support the project over time. Start by thinking about the different roles partners can play in making the project successful. Bringing community members and key stakeholders into the process early helps sponsor agencies better prioritize improvements, use resources wisely, and ensure the final project reflects a range of community needs. As with any public amenity, ongoing community involvement builds a sense of ownership, pride, and long-term commitment to caring for the site.

A successful project depends on having a mix of partners to fill these roles. Local governments are often the first organizations that come to mind, but projects can also benefit from partnerships with nonprofits, private businesses, healthcare providers, colleges or universities, and major local employers or industries. Each partner may contribute different skills, perspectives, or resources.

Topic	Key Points
Purpose of Partnerships	Building a broad group of supporters helps guide early improvements and ensures long-term stewardship. Community involvement creates ownership, pride, and lasting commitment.
Partner Roles	Partners may help plan and prioritize improvements, contribute funding or expertise, represent community needs, and support long-term operations and maintenance.
Early Engagment	Engaging community members and stakeholders early improves decision-making, resource allocation, and ensures the project reflects diverse community needs.
Potential Partner Types	Local governments, nonprofit organizations, for-profit businesses, healthcare systems, colleges and universities, major employers, and local industries add to a diverse partnership.
How to Identify Partners	Look for organizations with missions aligned to the project, such as outdoor recreation, health and wellness, tourism, relevant product manufacturing or sales, and water recreation user groups.
Partnership Longevity	Long-term success is supported by stable organizations, clear roles, and formal agreements when needed. Informal relationships may be appropriate for flexible or seasonal support.
Key Takeaway	Diverse partners, early engagement, and clearly defined roles lead to successful water access projects and sustained stewardship.

When identifying potential partners, start with organizations whose missions align with the project. This might include groups that support outdoor recreation, promote health and wellness, boost tourism, manufacture or sell relevant products, or represent common water recreation users. This approach can help generate a strong initial list of potential partners.

Also consider expanding partnerships beyond traditional stakeholders to those that share common goals and interests, fostering stronger cooperation and community support, varied perspectives, and more effective long-term outcomes. Connecting with a larger network of supporters can generate a project with broader appeal and diverse resources, including innovative funding opportunities.

It's also important to think about how long you expect these partnerships to last. Projects are often more successful in the long run when they are supported by stable organizations and clear agreements. Consider when formal roles, schedules, and commitments are needed, and when more informal relationships—such as a group of seasonal volunteers—may fill the role.

1

Funding

Federal and state agencies; foundations; local governments

Planning and Design

State agencies; municipalities; emergency responders; outfitters

2

3

Technical Assistance

Federal agencies; state agencies; nonprofits; consultants

Stewardship and Maintenance

Local governments; watershed groups; land conservancies; volunteers

4

5

Programming and Outreach

Water trail managers; community groups; colleges; nonprofits

Sponsorship and Partnerships

Private businesses; major employers; higher education

6

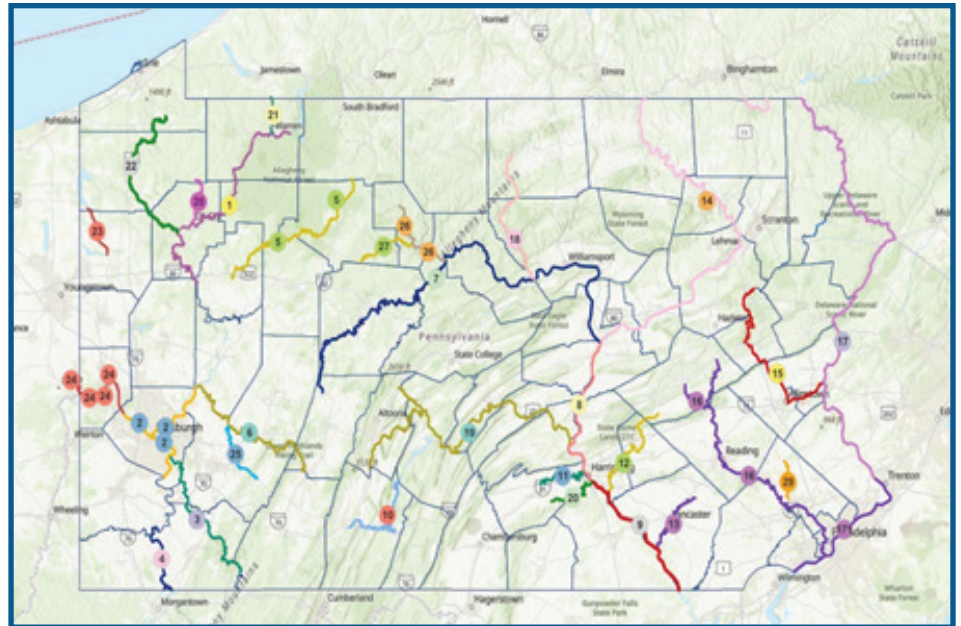
Listed above are typical partners included in water access projects, to assist you in developing a diverse project team for both short and long-term project development and site management.

Tools

- [DCNR Grantee Communications Kit](#)
- [National Fish & Wildlife public participation guide](#)

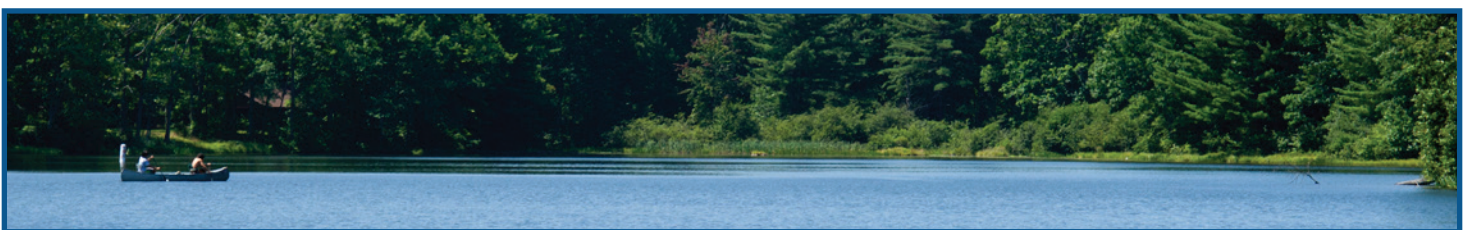
Focus On Water Trails First

As of the publication of this Access Strategy, there are 29 state-designated [water trails](#) in Pennsylvania, distributed across the major river basins and geographic regions of the state. Over 2,000 miles of waterways are managed by local Water Trail Managers with support from the Pennsylvania Water Trail Partnership, which includes PFBC, DCNR, Pennsylvania Environmental Council (PEC), and the National Park Service (NPS). This vibrant and robust network of Water Trails is the perfect starting point to concentrate and build on previous investments and existing partnerships. The Water Trail Partnership encourages local organizations to appropriately develop diverse recreation opportunities along designated Water Trails. By focusing efforts and investments on these designated segments, the Partnership can offer meaningful support for access upgrades or new access areas.



The Partnership also welcomes new waterway segments to be added to the Water Trails network. State and partner grant programs prioritize the development of appropriate public access opportunities along waterways that are existing or likely candidates for water trail. Waterway segments that are navigable by unpowered or powered boats, provide sufficient public access to enable a variety of trips, offer connections to communities or other recreational amenities, and have identified feasible portages around water hazards, are ideal water trail candidates. Additionally, waterways that intersect with publicly accessible parks and open space or are near to high-need or underserved communities, are also prime prospects for future water trail development.

Financial support is often available to support this work, such as Water Trail feasibility studies, access and stewardship plans, and local municipal or county plans that include actions that support accessible water trails. Technical assistance and grants are currently available through the Water Trail Partnership organizations (PFBC, DCNR, PEC, NPS), among others.



Access Site Signage

Good fishing and boating access signage works best as a connected system of signs that helps people find their way to, from, and on the water. This includes traditional shoreline signs for orientation and safety, along with markers placed on the water itself.

More recently, technology has become a helpful addition to this system. Tools like QR codes, mobile apps, interactive maps, augmented reality, and self-guided audio can extend the information provided on physical signs and support trip planning before visitors even arrive. Together, these tools create a more complete and user-friendly wayfinding experience.

Where appropriate and feasible to maintain, interpretive signage related to local historical and cultural context, unique wildlife, and natural resource stewardship may be added to the site to contribute to a deeper understanding and connection to the site or waterway.

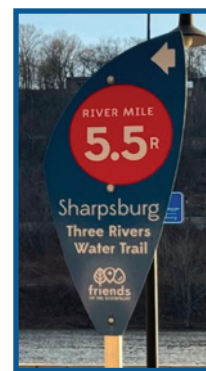
To support emergency response, access sites should also include clear location information—such as a physical address and/or GPS coordinates—to help EMS quickly and accurately reach the site when needed. It is also important for site owners and managing organizations to coordinate directly with local EMS providers so they are aware of all new and existing access areas under their responsibility.

Ultimately, a system of land-based and waterway signs should help anglers and boaters answer four basic questions: (1) Am I in the right place? (2) Where do I go? (3) What are the rules? (4) How do I stay safe? Below are suggested signage to consider at every access area.

Waterway Signs

Signs located along the water's edge or in the water primarily assist with navigation while on the water.

- **Access Area Markers:** Indicate the location of take-out and launch areas. These signs are usually reflective and brightly colored so they are easily spotted from the water.
- **Emergency Access Markers:** Offer a bird's eye view map that can help boaters identify their location and find nearby emergency exit points should an unsafe situation arise. Like Access Area Markers, these signs are usually reflective and brightly colored so they are easily spotted from the water.
- **River Mile Markers:** Measure distance along the waterway (typically using the waterway's centerline) starting with 0.0 at the headwaters. They assist with emergency response and help waterway users track their distance and orient themselves in relation to nearby hazards or access areas.



Mile markers like this one on the Three Rivers Water Trail help first responders quickly locate those in need of help during emergencies.
Photo Credit: Friends of the Riverfront

- **Danger Signs or Buoys:** Alert waterway users to hazards on the waterway, such as dams, low-head dams, construction areas, submerged obstacles, or other unsafe conditions. While signs are often installed along the shoreline, buoys may be used to provide advance warning directly on the water. Waterway managers proposing the use of buoys must coordinate with the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC) and obtain approval through an [Aids to Navigation \(ATON\) Plan](#) to ensure compliance with established navigation standards and safe, effective placement.

Land-Based Signs

Strategically located signs at access areas convey useful information prior to getting on the water and can enhance the user's experience onsite.

- **Directional signage:** Identifies the access area entrance from the roadway and assists with navigation to get to the site.
- **Orientation display:** Provides an overview of the waterway, available amenities in the vicinity, distance between access areas, and recommendations for trip planning. This information is often conveyed in the form of large-format informational displays.
- **Instructional signage:** Offers details to guide behavior at the site, including topics like designated use areas, parking restrictions, fishing and boating regulations, safety guidelines, and Leave No Trace stewardship reminders (how to handle trash, prohibition of glass containers, etc.).
- **Interpretive Signs or Kiosks:** Highlights a unique local feature that connects the reader to the place. Often these signs are focused on the local historical/cultural context or unique wildlife or plant life found at the site.



Photo Credit: Pennsylvania Environmental Council

Planning for water access signage goes beyond the placement of directional signs—it is the strategic organization of information to support how people navigate the environment. Successful signage systems rely on consistent visual language, clear hierarchy, and thoughtful placement to guide users through spaces with clarity and confidence. Coordinating sign details, such as design elements, content, size and material among all access areas within a given water

trail provides consistency and predictability for users. Viewing signage as a network between multiple access areas augmented by digital resources also often leads to more efficient sign design and maintenance for site managers.

Like other site amenities, the amount and type of signage, and the design details, may differ based on the type of access. Rustic sites typically contain less signage, in keeping with their more natural context. In the case of rustic sites, signage should be thoughtfully designed to align with the surrounding “low impact” context and prioritize the most necessary information to share—simple location information, basic directions and instructions, and safety guidelines. Enhanced and developed areas typically include more signage, expanding beyond the most necessary safety signage to include directional signage, orientation kiosks and educational items.

Placing and installing river signage is challenging because water levels, flow, debris, ice, and shoreline vegetation can all change conditions quickly and affect visibility. Without accounting for these factors, signs can be damaged, lost, or washed downstream, reducing both effectiveness and safety.

Durable, weather-resistant materials and thoughtful installation are essential for long-lasting wayfinding. Sign design should also prioritize accessibility and inclusivity by using clear symbols, concise language, and high-contrast colors, along with careful attention to height, placement, and orientation. Together, these considerations help ensure signage remains visible, resilient, and usable for all waterway users.

Tools

- [American Whitewater Signage Toolbox](#)
- [River Safety Signage Examples, River Management Society](#)
- [Water Trail Wayfinding and Signage Guide, Susquehanna Greenway Partnership](#)
- [Aids to Navigation \(ATON\) Manual, PFBC](#)





Conclusion

Pennsylvania's commitment to enhancing recreational water access reflects a growing recognition of the importance of outdoor spaces for physical, mental, and community well-being. With 61% of the population living within a 10-minute drive of a public recreational water site, the state has made significant strides in ensuring broad access to its aquatic resources. As an increasingly diverse population seeks opportunities for outdoor recreation, addressing barriers to access has never been more important. By providing a unified strategy and resources for improving and expanding water access, this toolkit will assist partners to meet the rising demand for water-based recreation, support sustainable environmental practices, and create more opportunities to participate in fishing and boating across the Commonwealth.



Appendix 1: Toolkit for Overcoming Barriers

Physical Barriers: Features of public access points that make accessing water for recreation use out of reach for users due to tangible disconnections.

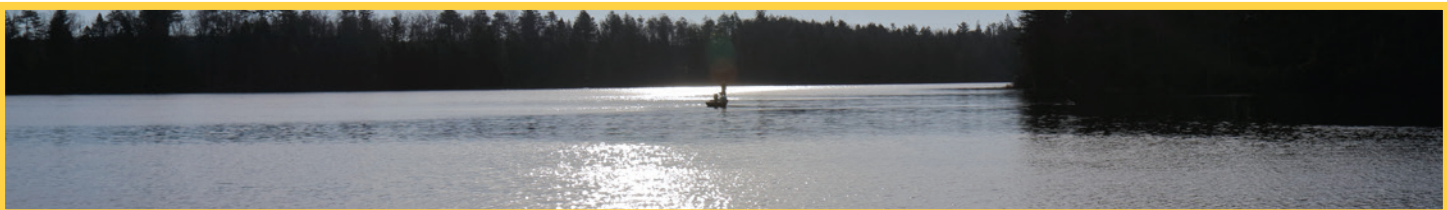
Barrier: Residents cannot reach the water due to a lack of public access within a reasonable distance from their home (greater than a 10-minute drive)

Solution	Tools
Prioritize new access sites to provide a public access point within a 10-minute drive of all residents	• TPL map showing communities within 10 minutes of water recreation. • Access Strategy maps identifying on-water access gaps in the waterway network (paddling distance)
Provide a diversity of activities at each public access site, as appropriate (boating, fishing, splashing)	• RMS design guidelines
Provide diverse experiences at public access sites (developed vs. rustic)	• RMS design guidelines
Include ample amenities at each public access site (restrooms, pavilion, fish cleaning station)	• Community surveys • Park and open space plan • Water trail network plan

Barrier: Recreation users cannot reach the water due to tangible disconnections or physical barriers

Solution	Tools
Make every site as accessible as possible	• Balance accessibility improvements and natural resource impacts • Actively engage stakeholders in site design • Provide descriptive information about access amenities





Financial Barriers: The cost associated with developing and maintaining public access sites is prohibitive, which results in reduced water-recreation opportunities. Similarly, the cost for individuals to obtain the necessary equipment or transportation shuttles to support the recreation outing may be high enough to deter participants.

Provider Barrier: The cost associated with developing and maintaining public access sites is prohibitive, which results in reduced water-recreation opportunities.

Solutions for constructing new facilities	Tools
Leverage available grant funding	- Federal sources (e.g. National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF)) - State sources (e.g. DCNR, PFBC, Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED)) - Non-profit or private foundation sources (PEC, WPC, water trail, or other mini grant programs)
List local access sites and amenities to prioritize investments in new or improved sites AND promote available sites to the public	Access Site Inventory form
Familiarize yourself with permitting requirements, or seek help with the process from an expert consultant	- Seek out a consultant experienced with waterway access development - Consult with DEP and/or the local County Conservation District (Pennsylvania Association for Conservation Districts) State Historic Preservation Office - Pennsylvania Conservation Explorer / Pennsylvania Natural Diversity Inventory (PNDI)
Solutions for maintaining existing facilities	Tools
Utilize organized and trained volunteers	Keep PA Beautiful Waterway Stewards, PFBC's Adopt an Access program
Partner with water trail manager (if applicable) or other partner organizations to develop a stewardship plan for the waterway with clearly defined roles and responsibilities	MOU with clearly defined roles and responsibilities (sample here)⁵

Financial Barriers: The cost associated with developing and maintaining public access sites is prohibitive, which results in reduced water–recreation opportunities. Similarly, the cost for individuals to obtain the necessary equipment or transportation shuttles to support the recreation outing may be high enough to deter participants.

Participant Barrier: Financial Barrier related to cost of equipment and transportation

Solution	Tools
Rentals and outfitters (provide equipment and services to the public)	• PFBC PA Boat Rental Businesses list • Fishing Tackle Loaner Program Sites • Life Jacket Loaner Sites • Local Chamber of Commerce and /or Tourism and Visitors Bureau
Sojourns /events / programming	• PA State Parks / Forests • Local / county park and recreation organizations • Get Outdoors PA Community Partners list • PFBC Regional Outreach & Education Coordinators (provide fishing and boating skills instructor training)
Coordinate with transportation providers to provide access to sites	• Local public transit authorities • Coordinate with school bus companies (summer) • Use parking or staging space available at vacant or underutilized facilities such as shopping malls, banks, business campuses etc.

Psychological Barriers: Inexperience with water–based recreation results in hesitancy to engage in such activities and/or a lack of knowledge necessary to participate safely

Barrier: Skill building and confidence levels

Solution	Tools
Programming	• Outfitters and recreation providers • American Canoe Association, state parks, programming at local parks/clubs and outfitters • Specific events / Sojourns • Guides and training resources • PFBC fishing and boating skills instructor training

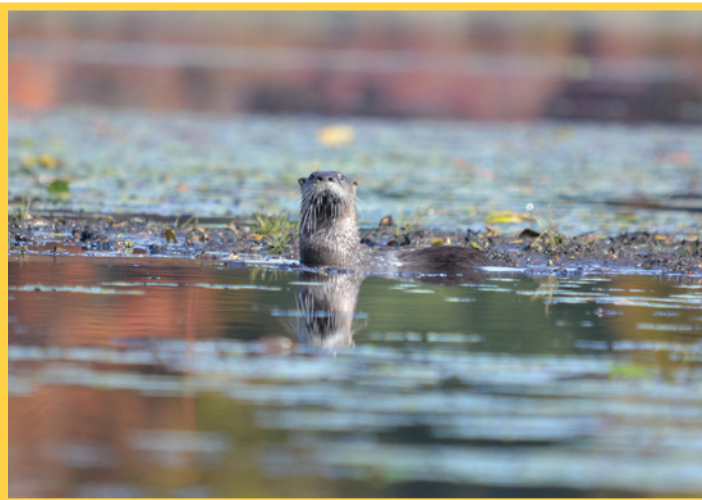
Psychological Barriers: Inexperience with water-based recreation results in hesitancy to engage in such activities and/or a lack of knowledge necessary to participate safely

Barrier: Safety

Solution	Tools
User-oriented (multi-lingual or graphic) signage	• Universal icons, info graphics, strategic selection of translated signage
Presence of law enforcement, park ranger/ guide to provide help	• Coordinate with local law enforcement • Develop an ambassador program (ex. South Yuba River Ambassador program)
Determining if water is safe for swimming and boating	• USGS Water Data • DEP Annual Water Quality Report • DCNR State Parks and State Forests Signage • Waterkeeper Network and other non-profit monitoring for bacteria levels and safe swimming conditions
Programming targeted at safe recreation, acknowledging hazards, etc.	• Site-specific hazard / navigation signage • Safety orientation during public programs

Barrier: Activating curiosity/ where to start

Solution	Tools
Develop social network for long term engagement	• Meet Up, social media groups • Outdoor recreation groups invite new users of all demographics to participate • New and experienced users create affinity groups and share stories about engagement in fishing and boating
Programming offered to diverse population/ community groups	• Engage with community leaders to provide public programming (ex. Bartram's Garden Community boathouse)
Identifying community barriers and prioritizing solutions	• Community assessment to identify barriers and inform appropriate solutions and priorities



Cultural Barriers: Historic factors that have led to a lack of diversity and inclusion in water-based outdoor recreation.

Barrier: Homogenous user groups—others feel unwelcome

Solution

Tools

Diversify user groups

- Personalize the message and the experience for inclusion
- Sojourns and programming targeted at new users, youth, diverse community groups
- Engage community groups that represent target user group in facility design and program design/offerings
- Encourage local leaders to become trained to lead programming in their communities

Diversify recreation facilities (rustic vs. developed) to provide a facility for different comfort levels or needs

- Consider network analysis to plan diverse access opportunities along the waterway
- Assess site conditions at each potential access site to ensure the appropriate level of development
- Ensure that ADA accessible sites are installed in pairs so users can get on and off the water at accessible sites a reasonable distance apart.
- Provide opportunities for water-adjacent activities

Multi-Faceted Solution—Water Trails Program: A formalized water recreation program like the water trails program can address all of these barriers

Solution	Tools
Physical	• Diversity of experiences across water trail system –urban and wild/scenic, calm flow and swift rapids, developed itineraries for trips • Diverse amenities at sites to draw many user groups and activities • Mapping • Safety and wayfinding signage
Financial	• Grant writing & fundraising
Psychological	• Community based programs • Instruction for beginners • Partnership with outfitters/liveries to support local economic development
Cultural	• Local management and stewardship provide a connection to local community leaders, businesses, perspectives, values and assets • Local management provides an opportunity to build trust through a local known entity





Appendix 2: Case Studies

Project: Heishman's Mill

River Basin:

Susquehanna River

Waterway:

Conodoguinet Creek
(Cumberland County)

Access Development Stage:

Conodoguinet Creek is a Pennsylvania Water Trail with partners interested in improving existing access points and extending the water trail to attract a more diverse set of recreational users.

Partners:

Cumberland County Planning Department, Conodoguinet Watershed Association, Camp Hill Borough, North Middleton Township, Harrisburg Canoe Club, Friends of Historic Heishman's Mill, PGC, PFBC, and DCNR.

Scenario:

Conodoguinet Water Trail Manager and local water trail stakeholders are interested in improving existing access points and extending the water trail to accommodate more paddlers, including beginners and tubers who have thus far been concentrated on the adjacent waterway, the Yellow Breeches Creek. Over-crowding of launch sites, user conflicts between boaters and anglers, and unsafe behavior on float trips on the Yellow Breeches have recently posed challenges for launch site landowners and local law enforcement.

Barriers to Access:

Physical; Financial - The Conodoguinet Creek Water Trail consists of two sections. The upper section from North Middleton Park to Cave Hill and the lower section from North Middlesex to the mouth of the creek on the Susquehanna River in Enola. The launches along the lower section are quite variable. A recent inventory completed by the local watershed organization and county planning department revealed launch sites that need rehabilitation or significant improvement. In addition, local paddlers would like to extend the trail farther upstream (to the west) to provide a variety of viewshed and experiences in a more rural setting. However, bank access on much of the passable upstream sections is privately owned. Major impediments include a historic mill dam at Heishman's Mill in West Pennsboro Township and the dam at Carlisle Borough's drinking water treatment facility.



Solutions:

Physical – Prioritize new access sites to provide a public access point within a 10-minute drive of all residents; provide a diversity of activities at public access sites throughout the region; provide diverse experiences at public access sites; include ample amenities at each public access site; make every site as accessible as possible. DCNR staff provided technical assistance in the development of the site layout to accommodate an ADA accessible viewing platform, walkway and parking.

Financial – Leverage available grant funding; list local access sites and amenities to prioritize investments in new or improved sites and promote available sites to the public; get familiar with permitting requirements, or seek help with the process from an expert consultant; utilize local public works staff; enter into a lease agreement/maintenance agreement with a capable partner organization or private business; utilize organized and trained volunteers



Experienced local paddlers cataloged a variety of potential upstream access locations, noting river mileage (distance from the mouth) and characteristics of the site. This list was used to direct focus on a limited number of site rehabilitation and development priorities:

- Develop a portage at Heishman's Mill ([40.213551, -77.314552](#))
- Develop access for upstream launch location on Pennsylvania State Game Land 169
- Rehabilitate existing launch at Seibert Park, Camp Hill Borough, restore a local riparian corridor, and build a walking trail connection to a large suburban population center ([40.252679, -76.927821](#))

Project Funding:

Heishman's Mill – \$172,800 grant funding from DCNR, PFBC and Cumberland County / non-cash contributions provided by Chesapeake Bay Foundation, Friends of Heishman's Mill, and local legal professionals that donated services.

Project: Lackawaxen River Access Development

River Basin:

Delaware River

Waterway:

Lackawaxen River (Wayne County)

Access Development Stage:

Wayne County is interested in elevating the recreational use of the Lackawaxen River and surroundings for both residents and visitors. Plans for the future are focused on a multi-modal trail (water, land and rail) which the County is working on by completing smaller contributing projects.



Partners:

Lackawaxen River Trails, Wayne County, Honesdale Borough, Pocono Forests & Waters Conservation Landscape

Scenario:

Development of two new river access sites on the Lackawaxen will be the first step in developing a multi-modal trail system in the region, connecting Honesdale to Hawley. Funding from PFBC, DCNR, and National Weather Service (NWS) are being used to install boat ramps, ADA parking, restrooms and other launch site amenities.



Barriers to Access:

Physical – Residents cannot reach the water due to a lack of public access within a reasonable distance from their home

Solutions:

Physical – Wayne County hired a consultant to assess the status of current access within the county, with the goal of prioritizing new access sites to provide a public access point within a 10-minute drive of all residents. There was also an interest in integrating a variety of activities, experiences, and amenities at each new or improved site, as appropriate. The County continued work with the consultant to assist them in obtaining and leveraging grant funding along with available local funding. The result was the improvement of two access sites offering fishing and boating amenities in diverse settings. The local community and county leveraged roughly nearly \$200,000 of local funds to obtain approximately \$660,000 of state grant funding to complete these projects.

**Project Funding:**

- White Mills: \$153,000 grant funding from DCNR and PFBC / \$32,000 local funds
- Sycamore Point: \$507,000 grant funding from DCNR and PFBC / \$152,000 local funds



Project: Bartram's Garden Boat Dock

River Basin:

Delaware River

Waterway:

Schuylkill River (Philadelphia County)

Access Development Stage:

The City of Philadelphia and the John Bartram Association seek to leverage a growing tide of users who are accessing the tidal Schuylkill River at Bartram's Garden. Reconnecting neighborhoods of Southwest Philadelphia with the Schuylkill River, which has been inaccessible to the public for generations, is guiding principle for the facilities, activities, and programs offered at Bartram's Garden.

Partners:

City of Philadelphia, Schuylkill River Greenways,

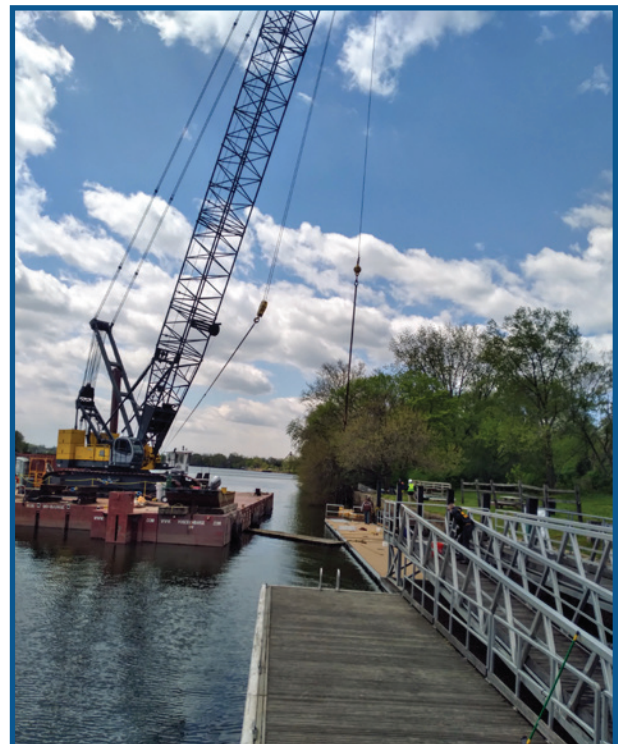
Scenario:

Extension of a current boat dock to provide safe river access for unpowered boats, especially more novice water recreationist, a larger access area for a growing number of users and accommodate fishing access and boating access at the same facility.

Barriers to Access:

Physical, Financial, Psychological, Cultural:

The current boat dock is small and set higher off the water, making departure from this launch in an unpowered boat a difficult task, especially for beginners or those with lesser mobility. The increasing number of anglers and boaters at this site also results in frequent user conflicts at the dock. Due to the lack of waterfront property available for water access sites, it is more cost effective to improve the current dock than seek a new location for an expanded dock. Bartram's Garden has the capacity and expertise to offer fishing and boating programs to the public, but the small and ill-designed dock limits the programming that can be offered. User conflicts lead to visitors feeling intimidated, uncomfortable, and unprepared.



Solutions:

Physical: The extended boat dock offers a more spacious water access area for diverse user groups and offers a more user-friendly launching point for unpowered boats. Including accessibility features allows visitors of various abilities to use the facility independently.

Financial: Bartram's Garden offers one of the only public water access sites within the Tidal Schuylkill River. By providing the public with a large, ADA accessible dock, both local community members and visitors can enjoy fishing and boating activities without requiring a personal investment in equipment and transportation. Bartram's Garden offers diverse fishing and boating programs to the public free of charge to allow anyone interested in the activities to join.

Psychological: Through relationships with local community groups, and frequent free programming available to the public, Bartram's Garden offers a welcoming environment for beginners to learn fishing and boating skills and related safety information to build confidence in their water recreation abilities.

Cultural: Neighboring communities have been cut off from using the Schuylkill River for recreation for generations. As a result, many community members don't have the experience or confidence to participate in water recreation activities. The expanded dock, paired with the extensive community engagement and recreational programming offered by Bartram's Garden, provides opportunities for residents and visitors to get to know the river. A variety of activities are offered and supported at this site to allow visitors to pursue their interests, and feel welcome at the water's edge.

Project Funding:

\$150,000 grant funding from DCNR / \$500,000+ local funds





Appendix 3: Template Access Area Inspection Sheet

Template Fishing and Boating Access Area Inspection Sheet

(Please complete all applicable information for access area inspections, periodic construction reports, field observation reports and final inspection reports)

Site Information	
Site:	
Waterbody:	
County:	
Municipality:	
Property Owner:	

Inspection Report Guide							
	Item (specify appropriate items)	N/A (X)	Condition (1-poor; 2-good; 3-excellent)		Comments (material, dimensions, etc.)		
Parking Area	Access Road	☐					
	Entrance from Main Road	☐					
	Spaces	☐		# of Vehicle	# of Trailer	# of ADA	
	Lot, Overall Condition	☐		Paved		Gravel	
Restrooms	Flush/Vault Restroom	☐					
	Portable Toilet	☐					
	Pump-Out/Potty	☐					
	Dump/Sewer Lift Station						
Fishing/Boating Access	Launch Ramp	☐			Concrete Planks	Concrete Pads	Geocell
	Bulkhead	☐					
	Pier/Platform	☐					
	Dock	☐			Specify Material		
	Handrails	☐					
	Gangway	☐					
	ADA Access	☐					
	Walkway	☐					
Miscellaneous	Trash Receptacles	☐					
	Drainage	☐			Recommended Improvements		
	Shoreline Protection	☐					
	Dry Hydrant	☐					
	Sediment	☐					
	Patron Usage	☐	Light	Medium	Heavy	Comments	
			☐	☐	☐		
Signage	Site Signage/Ownership Acknowledgement	☐					
	Funding Signage/ Acknowledgement (if applicable)	☐					
	Kiosk/Bulletin Board	☐					

COMMENTS/RECOMMENDED IMPROVEMENTS

Please include any comments regarding the overall condition and recommended improvements for this site.

REVIEW

<i>Is the site being operated and maintained in good working order?</i>		Yes	☐	No	☐
<i>Is the site ensuring adequate public access?</i>		Yes	☐	No	☐
Inspected by:		Initials:		Date/Time:	
Reviewed by:		Initials:		Date/Time:	



Appendix 4: Suggested Amenities for Different Types of Access Areas

Fishing Access Sites

Rustic

- Pull-off or gravel parking lot
- Temporary/seasonal restroom – nice to have
- Regulatory signage
- Wayfinding signage
- Walking path to water's edge

Enhanced/Development

- Gravel parking lot or paved parking lot
- Temporary/seasonal restroom or Permanent/ADA restroom
- Dock/pier
- Regulatory signage
- Wayfinding signage
- Safety signage
- Accessibility/Informational Signage
- Interpretive signage
- Walking path to water's edge

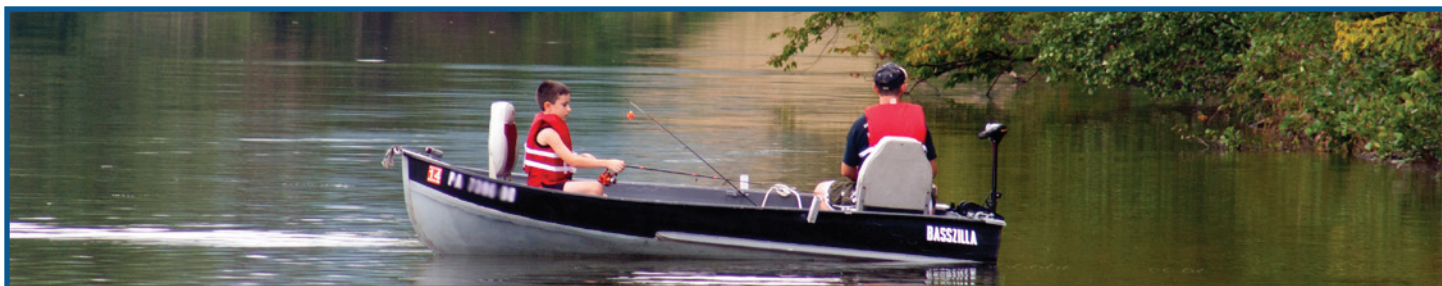
Unpowered Boating/Paddling Access Sites

Rustic

- Gravel or paved parking lot
- Temporary/seasonal restroom
- Regulatory signage
- Wayfinding signage
- Safety signage
- Walking path to water's edge
- Soft/carry-in launch

Enhanced/Development

- Paved parking lot
- Permanent/ADA restrooms
- Boat trailer parking
- Staging/boat prep area
- Regulatory signage
- Wayfinding signage
- Safety signage
- Accessibility/Challenge Signage
- Interpretive signage
- Walking path to water's edge
- Geo Cell or hard surface launch



Powered Boating Sites

Rustic

- Gravel parking lot
- Boat trailer parking
- Temporary/seasonal restroom
- Staging and boat prep areas – nice to have
- Regulatory signage
- Wayfinding signage
- Safety signage
- Hard surface launch

Enhanced/Development

- Paved parking lot
- Boat trailer parking
- Permanent restrooms
- Staging and boat prep areas
- Dock/pier/platform
- Regulatory signage
- Wayfinding signage
- Safety signage
- Accessibility/Informational Signage – check NPS guides
- Interpretive signage – check NPS guides, may be a future consideration
- Hard surface launch
- Second launch for unpowered boats – nice to have



Appendix 5: Permitting Guidance

Permitting Guidance

- Construction activities along the waterway must be reviewed and approved by the local County Conservation District
- Construction activities along a waterway will generally require a DEP permit
 - [DEP Permit Application Consultation Tool](#)
 - [OnBase Electronic Forms Upload \(pa.gov\)](#)
 - Typically, a GP-2 Small Docks and Boat Launch Ramps Permit is required from DEP for construction activities along a waterway
 - Occasionally projects require a more involved permitting process (larger projects over 20 feet wide and 100 feet long) –waterway obstruction and encroachment general permits
- Projects funded by federal grants may require a more enhanced compliance review that is communicated to funding recipients through the grant award process.

PNDI Process for New Access or Significant Upgrades to Current Access

[Pennsylvania Natural Diversity Inventory \(PNDI\) FAQ](#)

When do you need a PNDI review?

- If you need a DEP permit for your project (most DEP permits require a PNDI search)
- If a grant program/opportunity requires that you show proof that you have completed the PNDI process
- PNDI receipts are valid for 2 years

How do you complete a PNDI review?

[Video Tutorial](#)

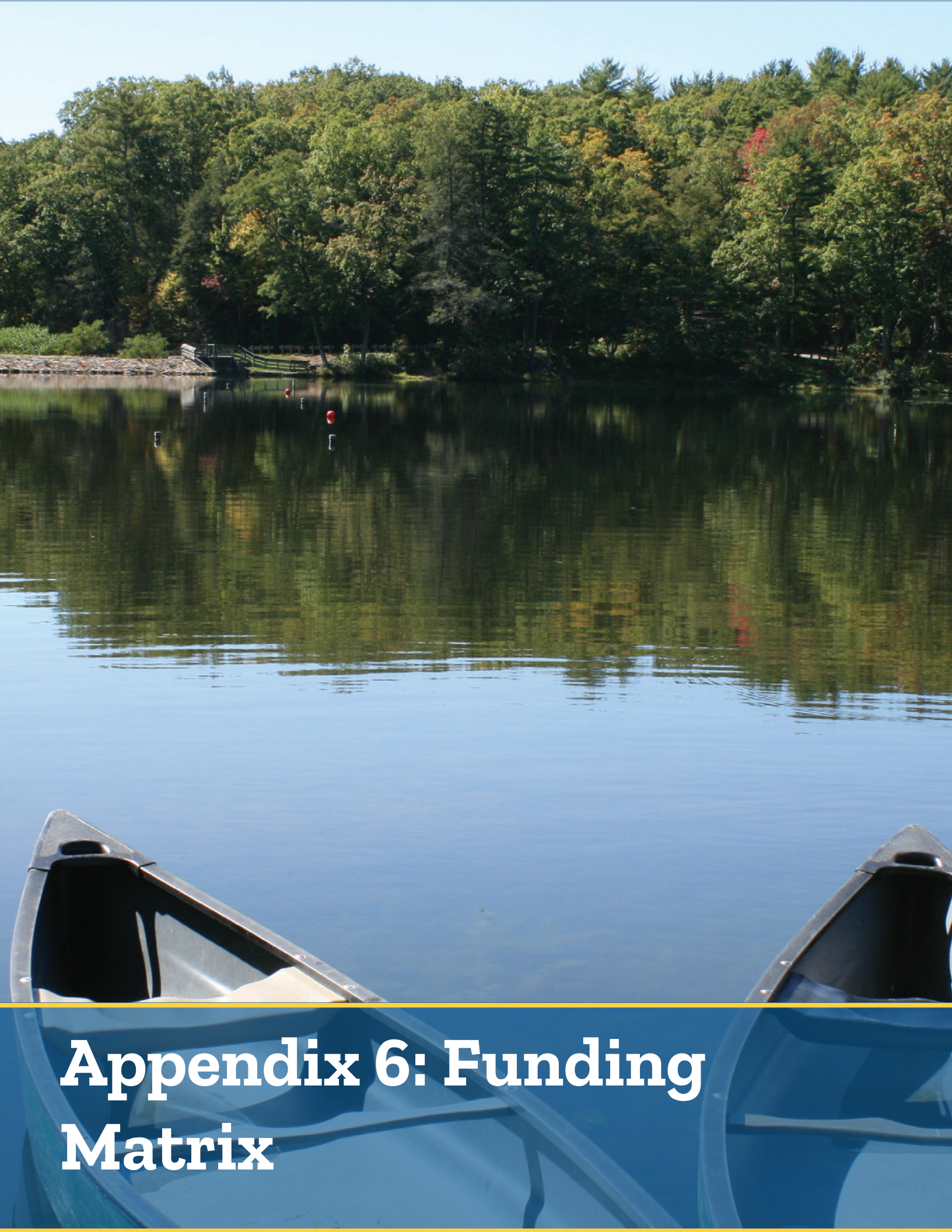
Option 1: online

- Go to the PNDI Environmental [Review | PA Conservation Explorer](#)
- [Register](#) and login
- [Map](#) project area
- View information on project area
- Obtain a PNDI receipt
 - \$40 per project--Government entities may qualify for an exemption to the fee. Apply for an exemption [here](#).
- Submit signed copy of receipt AND required documentation from jurisdictional agencies as proof of a complete process

Option 2: offline

- Complete [Submission Form](#)
- Send form and project materials to 4 agencies listed at the bottom of the form (DCNR, PFBC, PGC, USFWS)
- No charge for offline submissions
- Submit completed submission form AND responses from 4 jurisdictional agencies as proof of a complete process





Appendix 6: Funding Matrix

	Western Pennsylvania Conservancy (WPC)	POWR	PFBC	DCNR	PEC
	<u>Canoe Access Development Fund</u>	<u>Statewide Waterway Access Grant (SWAG)</u>	<u>Boating Facility Grant Program (BFGP)</u>	<u>Community Conservation Partnership Program (C2P2)</u>	<u>PA Water Trail Mini-Grant Program</u>
Funding Amount (Per Project)	Up to \$5,000	Up to \$30,000	Varies but typically \$30,000–\$200,000	Varies but typically \$30,000–\$200,000	Up to \$5,000
Eligible Applicants	Local governments, most recreation or conservation related non-profits (501(c)(3))	Local governments, most recreation or conservation related non-profits (501(c)(3))	Local governments, most recreation or conservation related non-profits (501(c)(3))	Local governments, most recreation or conservation related non-profits (501(c)(3))	Local governments, most recreation or conservation related non-profits (501(c)(3))
Frequency of Funding	Annually	Rolling	Annually	Annually	Annually
Grant Cycle	Applications due in November; grants awarded in December; 1 year to complete project	Rolling application; 2 years to complete project	Applications due December 1; grants awarded late spring; 2 years to complete project	Application due April 30; grants awarded in the fall; 4 years to complete project	Applications due in October; grants awarded in November; 1 year to complete project
Program Geography	WPC Region	State-wide	State-wide	State-wide	State-wide
Site Visit Required	Recommended	Recommended	Yes	Recommended	Recommended
Distribution of Funds	Check upon contract execution	Reimbursement upon completion/inspection	Reimbursement upon completion/inspection	Reimbursement in installments throughout the project	90% of grant awarded with contract; 10% at completion
Match Requirement	None, but encouraged	1:1 match required	1:1 match required	1:1 match required	1:1 match required

	Western Pennsylvania Conservancy (WPC)	POWR	PFBC	DCNR	PEC
	<u>Canoe Access Development Fund</u>	<u>Statewide Waterway Access Grant (SWAG)</u>	<u>Boating Facility Grant Program (BFGP)</u>	<u>Community Conservation Partnership Program (C2P2)</u>	<u>PA Water Trail Mini-Grant Program</u>
Agreement Term	10 years	25 years	25 years	25 years	25 years
ADA Access	Not Required	Recommended, in accordance with 2010 standards	Required, in accordance with 2010 standards	Required, in accordance with 2010 standards	Recommended, in accordance with 2010 standards
Maintenance Funds Available	Yes, up to \$1,000 over 10 years	no	no	no	no
Project types Permitted	Acquisition/ easement or lease, Design/ engineering, construction	Acquisition, planning/ design, construction (new, expansion or enhancement)	Acquisition/ easement, design/ engineering, construction	Acquisition/ easement, design/ engineering, construction	Design/ engineering, construction, signage, maps, events, and community engagement

This list constitutes the most broadly applicable funding opportunities. Other funding opportunities, such as the Boating Infrastructure Grant (BIG) and Clean Vessel Act (CVA) available through PFBC or the Department of Community and Economic Development's (DCED) programs may fit your unique situation.



Pennsylvania
Fish and Boat Commission



Pennsylvania
**Department of Conservation
and Natural Resources**

