Lock 60 at the Schuylkill Canal Parkway located just off Route 29 in Mont Clare, Pennsylvania.

A Guide to the Lock 60 & Schuylkill Canal Park and Recreation Area

Location
Lock 60 at the Schuylkill Canal Parkway located just off Route 29 in Mont Clare, PA 19453

Area Managed by
Montgomery County Division of Parks, Trails and Historic Sites
610-278-3553
Schuylkill Canal Association 610-917-0021
Upper Providence Township 610-565-4944

In an Emergency
Dial 911 or notify a park ranger.

Nearest Hospital
Phoenixville Hospital 140 N. Main Street
Phoenixville, PA 19460
610-983-1000

Our History
The Schuylkill Navigation System was incorporated during 1815 to establish an industrial transportation route along the Schuylkill River. Dams and canals were constructed to provide navigable routes around shallow stretches of the river. Each section of canal is known as a reach and varied in length from less than 1 to 22 miles. Upon completion, the navigation system was operated and maintained along with 62 miles of hand-dug canals. Additional man-made structures included 120 locks, 18 aqueducts and 1 towpath tunnel.

The Schuylkill Navigation System functioned as one of our nation's most important industrial highways until being replaced by the railroads. After the 1920s, the canal reaches were used mostly for recreation. Pleasure boats took people on excursions and almost every back yard near the canals was used as a small dock and canoe or rowboat. Today many of the canal reaches have been filled in with coal silt that has been dredged from the Schuylkill River during the 1990s.

Our section of canal was known as the Oakes Reach, named after Thomas Oakes, the Schuylkill Navigation System's first principal engineer. The Oakes Reach, originally consisted of three and a half miles of flat water between Lock 60 (Dougherty's Lock) and Lock 61 (Brush Creek Lock). Lock 60 is the only functioning lock on the Schuylkill River. Lock 61 was located just upstream from the confluence of the Schuylkill River and Perkiomen Creek.

The Schuylkill River and Lock 60:

Directions
Lock 60 is located just off Route 29 in Mont Clare, Pennsylvania. The park is easily reached from major roadways in the State. From Route 23, take Routes 29, 113, 176, 227, 422, and 476. Detailed directions are available at www.schuylkillcanal.org

Local Services
The Schuylkill Canal Park is located walking distance from numerous restaurants, cafés, and shops in downtown Phoenixville. Additional shopping and dining experiences, as well as overnight accommodations, are located a short drive away in Collegeville, King of Prussia, and other nearby Philadelphia suburbs.

Accessibility
Most of the Canal Park is easily accessible for all abilities. Hiking trails range from easy to moderately steep with some water crossings. The towpath is flat with paved and unpaved sections.

Recreational Opportunities
Participants are required to comply with all local, state, and federal regulations when using the area. The below list is presented as a guide to some of the opportunities and resources available in the area. Recreational opportunities are not limited to the below list.

Boating:
Canoeing and kayaking are some of the most popular uses of our area. "The Loop" is a 5 mile paddle on the river and can only be used by non-motorized boats. The portage from the river to canal is a 200 yard walk up a gently inclining mowed path. The portage from the canal to the river goes directly across a flat grassy field and parking area and is less than 100 yards.

A boat ramp for motorized fishing boats to access the river is located at the upstream parking lot across from the Locktender's House. Please be aware that motorized and non-motorized boats share this access point and the river is very shallow.

Canoe and Kayak Rental:
Rentals are available through Port Providence Paddle located along the canal at the 264 Canal Street (Fitzwater Station) in Port Providence, PA. 610-935-2570 or www.canoeandkayak.biz

Fishing:
The entire 2.5 miles of the canal is easily accessible by the adjacent towpath. Be sure to always check the local water temperature before venturing into the towpath. Please be aware that the towpath is a multi-use trail and can be quite busy at times.

The river is accessible at many locations along the canal. Motorized fishing boats are permitted in the river; however the river can be very shallow and rough during muddy conditions.

Picnicking:
The Schuylkill Canal Park consists of approximately 60 acres of land ideal for picnicking. Open fields are located throughout the many scenic overlooks located along our hiking trails. Please dispose of all waste in proper waste disposal containers.

Bicycling:
The Schuylkill Canal Trail runs along part of the towpath and runs south from at least 165 Bridge Street in Phoenixville via the Route 29 Bridge across the river.

Hiking/Walking:
The towpath upriver from Route 29 is a wheelchair accessible asphalt surface and a popular easy walk in very dry weather. There are numerous hiking trails to explore in the ravines and along the bluff. A guide to the Canal and Lock 60 Reaches. Downriver of Route 29, the towpath is an alternate connector to the Schuylkill River Trail, linking to the Longford Road parking lot and Reynolds Dog Park. A total of 15 acres of parkland along the canal are accessible to the public. The river is accessible at many locations along the canal.

Jogging/Running:
The park provides for an uncommon diversity of birds, reptiles and amphibians within a small area. Wildlife identification brochures are available in the Locktender's House and the informational kiosk located at Lock 60.

Cross-Country Skiing:
A snow fall of about 3 inches of snow typically provides a skiable surface on the towpath and a snow fall of about 6 inches will provide a skiable surface on the river trail and ravine trails. A frozen canal, with an ice thickness of 5 inches or greater, provides a very fast skiable surface.

Ice Skating:
Ice skating is probably one of the most consistent consumables of the canal. People have been ice skating for as long as the canal has been freezing. A minimum of 5 inches of ice is generally considered safe for ice skating, recommended that an ice thickness of 6-8 inches be confirmed before skating on the canal. Rocks and other debris are common on the frozen surface of the canal.

Additional Recreational Opportunities

The Schuylkill Canal Park is located within the Schuylkill Highlands, which is one of 7 Conservation Landscapes in southeastern Pennsylvania. Schuylkill Highlands includes a large portion of the Schuylkill River Watershed and the Hopewell Big Woods (the last remaining unbroken forest in southeastern Pennsylvania). See below for key information about this area.

Schuylkill River Trail (SRT): The SRT is a multi-use trail that will run a distance of approximately 225 miles from Pottsville to Philadelphia. Local trail head parking lots are located at 1000 Longford Road in Port Providence and 829 Townsend Line Road in Phoenixville for additional information at www.schuylkillrivertrail.com

Bike Schuylkill:
A free bike share program managed by the Schuylkill River Heritage Area (www.schuylkillriver.org). Bikes are free to use up to an end date with a valid driver license or a state-issued identification and available information at www.bikeschuylkill.org. Bikes can be picked up at Phoenix Cycles located at 165 Bridge Street in Phoenixville www.phoenix-cycles.com.

Schuylkill River Water Trail (SRWT): A SRWT guidebook is available through Schuylkill River Heritage Area at www.schuylkillriver.org. A comprehensive guide provides maps, travel tips, and checklists for paddlers to safely and comfortably enjoy the trip on the river. Guides are available for purchase online and at various locations including the Locktender’s House at the Schuylkill Canal Park.

Perkiomen Trail (PT): The PT is a 19-mile, multi-use trail that runs along the Perkiomen Creek from Pottstown to Phoenixville, PA. The PT connects multiple parks and is linked to Valley Forge National Historical Park, Valley Forge National Cemetery, Valley Forge National Park, Valley Forge National Military Park, and the Schuylkill River National Scenic River. Additional information at www.schuylkillrivertrail.com.

Upper Schuylkill Valley Park (USVP):
The USVP is located approximately 1.5 miles upstream from Lock 60 and consists of 15 acres of wildlife center. Additional information at www.montcopa.org.

Lower Perkiomen Valley Park (LPVP):
The LPVP consists of 107 acres of natural areas, open spaces, and recreational sports fields. Additional information at www.montcopa.org.

Black Rock Sanctuary (BRS):
The BRS is a 119 acre wildlife sanctuary located in Chester County across the Schuylkill River from the Schuylkill Canal Park. Additional information at www.chrs.org.

John James Audubon Center at Mill Grove Wildlife Sanctuary: Mill Grove is the first home of John James Audubon in America. The property consists of 175 acres of land and contains approximately 7 miles of trails and fronts Perkiomen Creek opposite of LPVP. Additional information at www.audubon.org.

Valley Forge National Park (VFNP):
VFNP was the site of the 1777-78 winter encampment of the Continental Army during the Revolutionary War. Today VFNP contains over 28 miles of authorized walking, hiking, biking, and horseback riding trails. Additional information at www.nps.gov/vafo.

Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site (HFHS):
HFHS is one of the finest examples of a rural American 19th century iron plantation, showcasing an early American industrial landscape from natural resource extraction to enlightened conservation. Additional information at www.nps.gov/vafo.

French Creek State Park (FCSP):
FCSP is made up of hardwood forests that once provided fuel to the furnaces at HFFHS. The 7,730 acres of parkland is the largest block of contiguous forest between Washington D.C. and New York City. Additional information at www.dcnr.state.pa.us.

Evansburg State Park (ESP):
ESP is a linear park along the Skippack Creek. The ridges and valleys that make up the park give the feeling of enclosure as well as offering scenic views. Additional information at www.dcnr.state.pa.us.

Natural Lands Trust Sites: Natural Lands Trust is a non-profit land conservation organization that currently owns and manages 41 natural areas preserving over 21,200 acres of land in southeastern Pennsylvania and southern New Jersey. Additional information at www.natlands.org.