

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 close-up view of the powerful water that continues to carve the valley. Popular activities are hiking, whitewater boating, rock climbing, picnicking, and exploring the scenic overlooks, forests, and waterfalls. The park is open from sunrise to sunset, year round.



Directions

GPS DD: Lat. 40.95168 Long. -80.16837
(Kildoo Picnic Area)

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 one-half mile from the intersection of US 19 and US 422.

Historic Gristmill: 1761 McConnells Mill Road, Portersville, PA 16051

Electric Vehicle Charging Station

A two-plug, electric-vehicle charging station is available for public use in the Kildoo Picnic Area parking lot. Please move to another parking space once your vehicle has been charged.

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. Slippery Rock Creek has varying degrees of whitewater conditions, including deep pools, rapids, and swift currents. Adults should closely supervise children at all times. Numerous accidents here have resulted in injury and death. **Please exercise extreme caution and stay on trails.**

History

THE HISTORIC GRISTMILL

In 1852, Daniel Kennedy built the first gristmill at this site. 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 mill 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.



Photo by David Woten

MCCONNELLS MILL COVERED BRIDGE

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

Recreational Opportunities

PICNICKING: The Kildoo Picnic Area is adjacent to the parking area at the northern end of the gorge near the historic gristmill. A steep trail leads down to the historic gristmill. Picnic tables, charcoal grills, a playground, and non-flush restrooms are available. Alcoholic beverages are prohibited. The ADA accessible Kildoo Pavilion accommodates up to 50 people and 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 and may be used for softball and other activities.



Photo by Roger A. Druschel

FISHING: Fishing is permitted anywhere along Slippery Rock Creek except from 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 section by Armstrong Bridge. Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission regulations and laws apply.

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 historic gristmill. The more advanced and rugged area is near Breakneck Bridge. Numerous accidents have occurred, resulting in serious injuries. Please exercise extreme caution when climbing or hiking in these areas.

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

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 one-half miles with a portage around the dam at the historic gristmill. 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 one-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 whitewater 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-powered boats must display one of the following: boat registration from any state; launch permit or mooring permit from Pennsylvania State Parks, available at most state park offices; launch use permit from the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission.

NO SWIMMING! Slippery Rock Creek is a 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 Moraine State 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 non-hunting seasons, firearms and archery equipment shall be kept in the owner's vehicle or enclosed trailer. Exceptions include: law enforcement officers and individuals with a valid *Pennsylvania License to Carry Firearms* are authorized to carry a firearm concealed on their person while they are within a state park.



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.

www.AmericanWhitewater.org

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.



Photo by Matthew Mann

Learn, Experience, Connect

McConnells Mill State Park offers a wide variety of programs year round. Gain a better understanding of the park's natural, cultural, and historical resources through guided outdoor recreation, hands-on activities, walks, special events, and other programs. The historic gristmill shows how waterpower was used to grind grains into flour. Guided tours of the mill are available May through October and as otherwise posted.

Curriculum-based environmental education programs are available to schools and organized groups. Call the park office to schedule a group program. A variety of professional development workshops are offered for teachers.



Photo by Charlene Reinhart

Geologic History



Photo by Garrett Talkington

WHICH ROCK IS SLIPPERY ROCK?

Slippery Rock Creek is 49 miles long and full of slippery rocks, yet it is named for one exceptionally slick rock below the Armstrong Bridge. It is believed that a trail used by Indigenous peoples forded the creek at a shelf of sandstone near a natural oil seep, which made the rock exceptionally slippery, and gave its name to the creek, a town, a university,



Photo by David Woten

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.
- Alcoholic beverages are prohibited.
- Prevent forest fires by only having a fire in proper facilities and properly disposing of hot coals. Do not leave a fire unattended.
- Do your part to keep wildlife wild! Enjoy wildlife from a safe distance and do not feed or approach wild animals.

Contact Moraine State Park or explore the online calendar of events, <https://events.dcnr.pa.gov>, for more information on mill hours and tours, public programs, and other learning experiences.

HERITAGE FESTIVAL

McConnells Mill Heritage Festival is held on the last full weekend in September. The festival celebrates the operational era of the historic gristmill (1852-1928). Visitors can observe artisans and craftspeople demonstrating their unique skills and try old-time games and crafts. Other activities include mill tours, corn-grinding demonstrations, musical entertainment, a Civil War encampment, and food vendors.

A Pennsylvania Recreational Guide for McConnells Mill State Park



pennsylvania
DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION
AND NATURAL RESOURCES



McConnells Mill State Park

c/o Moraine State Park
225 Pleasant Valley Road
Portersville, PA 16051-9650
724-368-8811
MoraineSP@pa.gov

Make online reservations at

www.dcnr.pa.gov/StateParks or call toll-free
888-PA-PARKS (888-727-2757), 7:00 AM to
5:00 PM, Monday to Saturday.

www.dcnr.pa.gov/StateParks

[visitPAparks](https://www.facebook.com/visitPAparks)

Cover photo by David Woten

An Equal Opportunity Employer

2022

Nearby Attractions

Information on nearby attractions is available from Visit Lawrence County. www.VisitLawrenceCounty.com

A few miles to the east on US 422 is **Moraine State Park**. This large park offers cabins, boating, fishing, swimming, disc golfing, hiking, hunting, bicycling, and other outdoor activities. 724-368-8811

Access for People with Disabilities

This symbol indicates facilities and activities that are Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessible for people with disabilities. This publication text is available in alternative formats.

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

Call 911 and contact a park employee. Directions to the nearest hospital are posted on bulletin boards and at the park office.

Nearest Hospital

UPMC Jameson
1211 Wilmington Ave
New Castle, PA 16105
724-658-9001

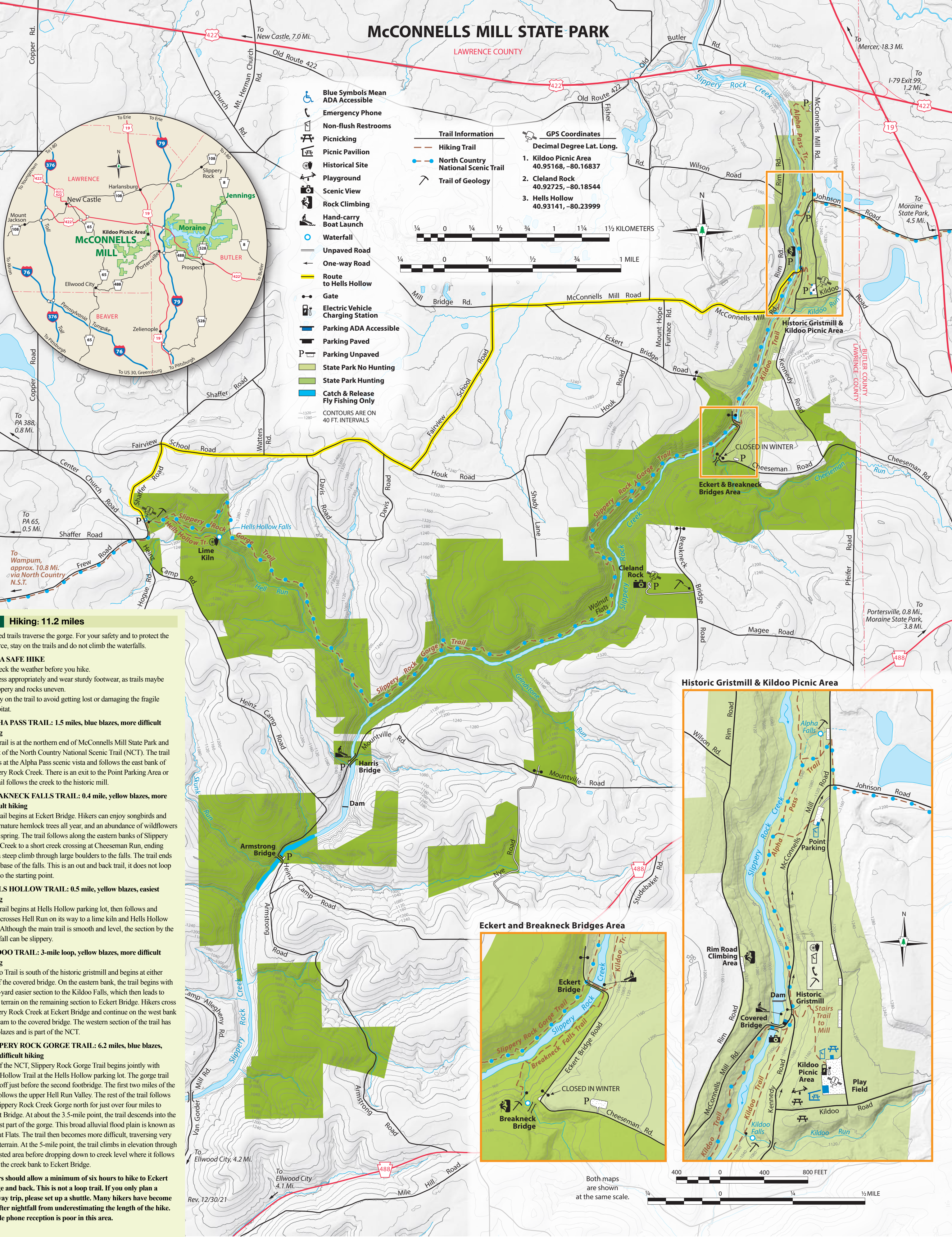
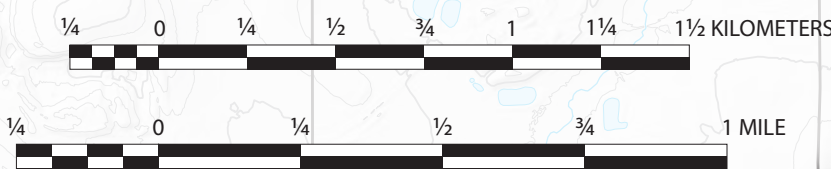
McCONNELLS MILL STATE PARK

LAWRENCE COUNTY

- Blue Symbols Mean ADA Accessible
- Emergency Phone
- Non-flush Restrooms
- Picnicking
- Picnic Pavilion
- Historical Site
- Playground
- Scenic View
- Rock Climbing
- Hand-carry Boat Launch
- Waterfall
- Unpaved Road
- One-way Road
- Gate
- Electric Vehicle Charging Station
- Parking ADA Accessible
- Parking Paved
- Parking Unpaved
- State Park No Hunting
- State Park Hunting
- Catch & Release Fly Fishing Only
- CONTOURS ARE ON 40 FT. INTERVALS

- Trail Information**
- Hiking Trail
 - North Country National Scenic Trail
 - Trail of Geology

- GPS Coordinates**
Decimal Degree Lat. Long.
1. Kildoo Picnic Area
40.95168, -80.16837
 2. Cleland Rock
40.92725, -80.18544
 3. Hells Hollow
40.93141, -80.23999



Hiking: 11.2 miles

Rugged trails traverse the gorge. For your safety and to protect the resource, stay on the trails and do not climb the waterfalls.

FOR A SAFE HIKE

- Check the weather before you hike.
- Dress appropriately and wear sturdy footwear, as trails may be slippery and rocks uneven.
- Stay on the trail to avoid getting lost or damaging the fragile habitat.

ALPHA PASS TRAIL: 1.5 miles, blue blazes, more difficult hiking

This trail is at the northern end of McConnell's Mill State Park and is part of the North Country National Scenic Trail (NCT). The trail begins at the Alpha Pass scenic vista and follows the east bank of Slippery Rock Creek. There is an exit to the Point Parking Area or the trail follows the creek to the historic mill.

BREAKNECK FALLS TRAIL: 0.4 mile, yellow blazes, more difficult hiking

The trail begins at Eckert Bridge. Hikers can enjoy songbirds and large mature hemlock trees all year, and an abundance of wildflowers in the spring. The trail follows along the eastern banks of Slippery Rock Creek to a short creek crossing at Cheeseman Run, ending with a steep climb through large boulders to the falls. The trail ends at the base of the falls. This is an out and back trail, it does not loop back to the starting point.

HELLS HOLLOW TRAIL: 0.5 mile, yellow blazes, easiest hiking

This trail begins at Hells Hollow parking lot, then follows and twice crosses Hell Run on its way to a lime kiln and Hells Hollow Falls. Although the main trail is smooth and level, the section by the waterfall can be slippery.

KILD00 TRAIL: 3-mile loop, yellow blazes, more difficult hiking

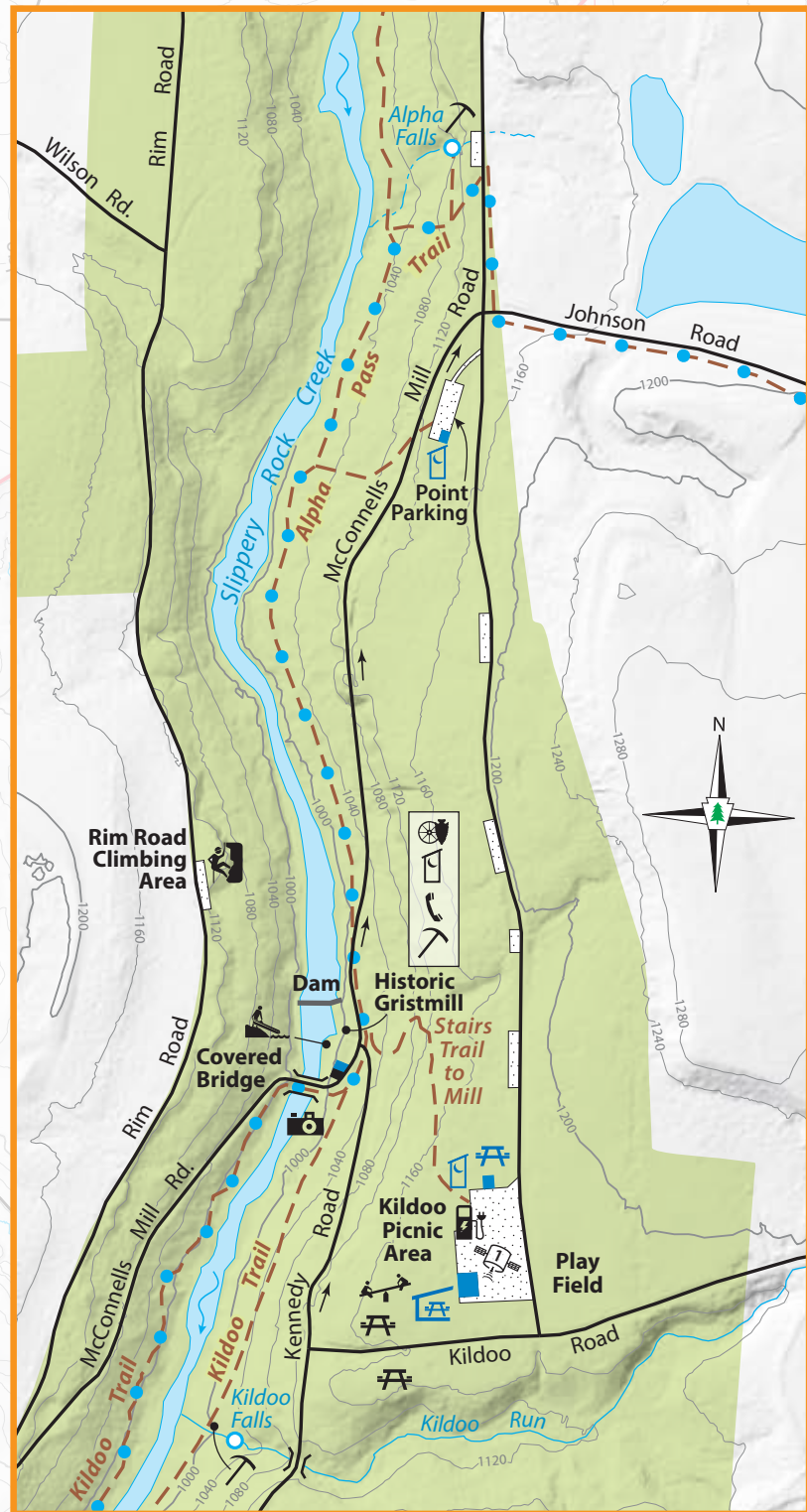
Kildoo Trail is south of the historic gristmill and begins at either end of the covered bridge. On the eastern bank, the trail begins with a 400-yard easier section to the Kildoo Falls, which then leads to rocky terrain on the remaining section to Eckert Bridge. Hikers cross Slippery Rock Creek at Eckert Bridge and continue on the west bank upstream to the covered bridge. The western section of the trail has blue blazes and is part of the NCT.

SLIPPERY ROCK GORGE TRAIL: 6.2 miles, blue blazes, most difficult hiking

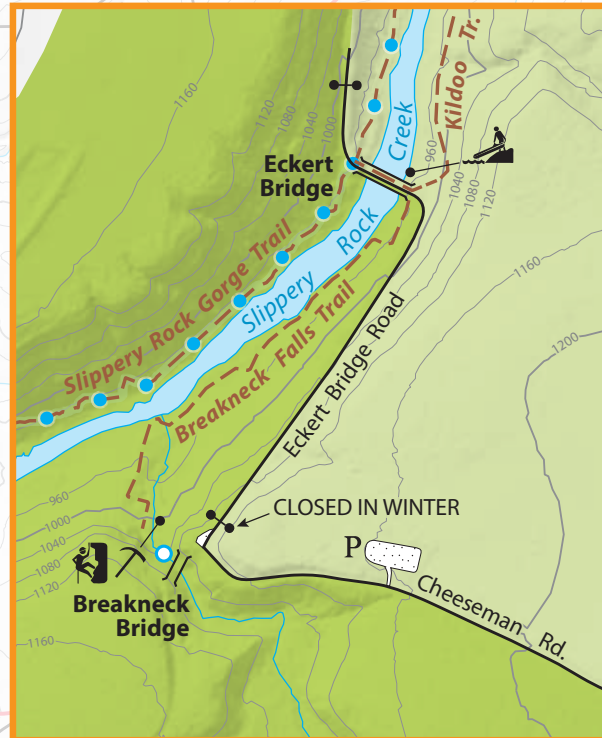
Part of the NCT, Slippery Rock Gorge Trail begins jointly with Hells Hollow Trail at the Hells Hollow parking lot. The gorge trail splits off just before the second footbridge. The first two miles of the trail follows the upper Hell Run Valley. The rest of the trail follows the Slippery Rock Creek Gorge north for just over four miles to Eckert Bridge. At about the 3.5-mile point, the trail descends into the deepest part of the gorge. This broad alluvial flood plain is known as Walnut Flats. The trail then becomes more difficult, traversing very steep terrain. At the 5-mile point, the trail climbs in elevation through a forested area before dropping down to creek level where it follows along the creek bank to Eckert Bridge.

Hikers should allow a minimum of six hours to hike to Eckert Bridge and back. This is not a loop trail. If you only plan a one-way trip, please set up a shuttle. Many hikers have become lost after nightfall from underestimating the length of the hike. Mobile phone reception is poor in this area.

Historic Gristmill & Kildoo Picnic Area



Eckert and Breakneck Bridges Area



Both maps are shown at the same scale.

