

**Pennsylvania State Parks Mission**

The primary purpose of Pennsylvania state parks is to provide opportunities for enjoying healthful outdoor recreation and serve as outdoor classrooms for environmental education. In meeting these purposes, the conservation of the natural, scenic, aesthetic, and historical values of parks should be given first consideration. Stewardship responsibilities should be carried out in a way that protects the natural outdoor experience for the enjoyment of current and future generations.

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

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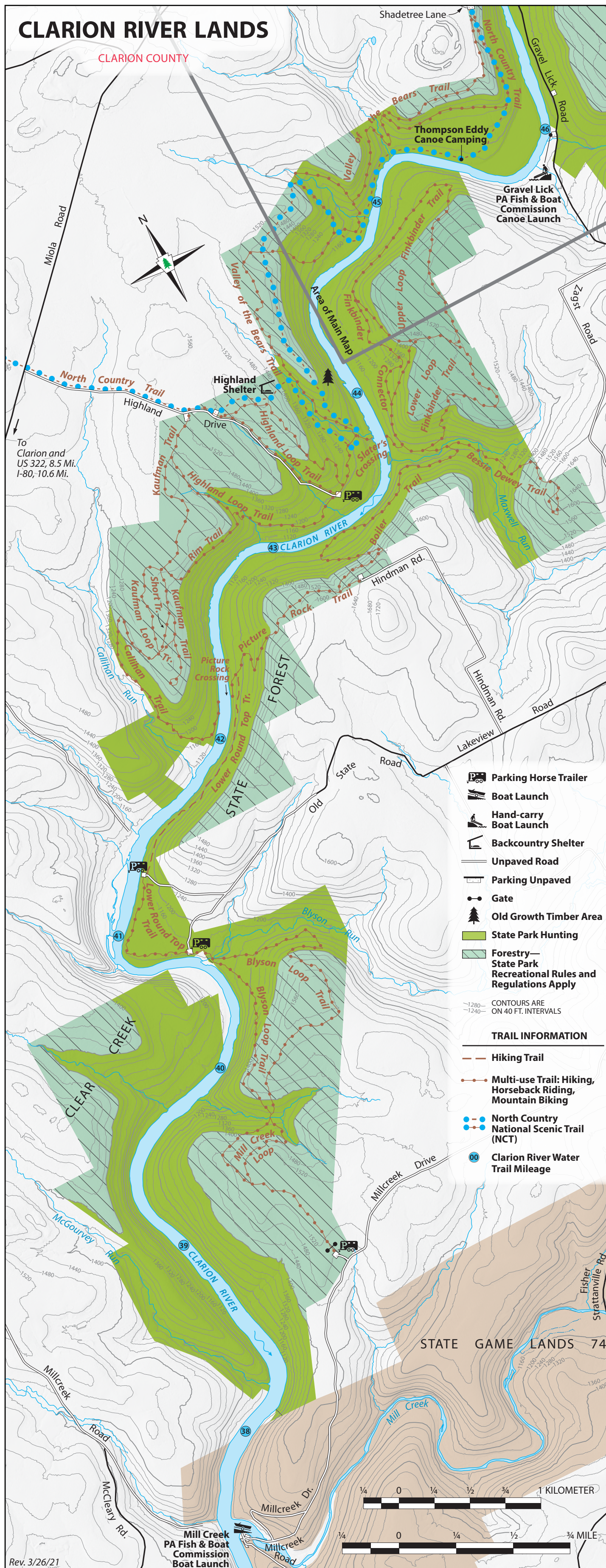
2021

**EXPLORE PENNSYLVANIA WILDS**


Pennsylvania Wilds is two million acres of public lands for hiking, biking, fishing, boating, hunting, and exploration in northcentral Pennsylvania.

Highlights of the area are elk watching, scenic PA 6, Pine Creek Gorge (PA Grand Canyon), the darkest skies in the east at Cherry Springs State Park, old growth timber at Cook Forest, and hundreds of miles of backpacking trails, bike paths, and trout fishing streams. [www.pawilds.com](http://www.pawilds.com)

Photo: View from the Old No. 9 Fire Tower, Cook Forest State Park


**CLARION RIVER LANDS**

**COOK FOREST STATE PARK**

The 8,500-acre Cook Forest State Park and 3,136-acre Clarion River Lands lie in scenic northwestern Pennsylvania. Known for its stands of old growth forest, the park's Forest Cathedral of towering white pines and hemlocks is a National Natural Landmark. A scenic 13-mile stretch of the Clarion River flows through Cook Forest State Park and is popular for canoeing, kayaking, and tubing.

**Directions**

GPS DD: Lat. 41.33292 Long. -79.20915

From the east, take Exit 78 off of I-80, then PA 36 north directly to the park in Cooksburg.

From the west, take Exit 60 off of I-80, then take PA 66 north to Leeper. From Leeper, follow PA 36 south seven miles to the park.

**Reservations**

Make online reservations at [www.visitPAparks.com](http://www.visitPAparks.com) or call toll-free 888-PA-PARKS (888-727-2757), 7:00 AM to 5:00 PM, Monday to Saturday.

**RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES**
**Spend the Day**

**HIKING:** There are over 47 miles of hiking trails and 4.3 miles of multi-use trails within Cook Forest State Park. An additional 24 miles of multi-use trails and 8 miles of hiking trails are located within the Clarion River Lands. A brochure of trail descriptions is available online and in the park office.

**BIKING:** Bikes are permitted on all one-way, dirt roads within the park. A 13-mile bicycle route follows lightly traveled roads within the park and a portion of Hefren Run Trail. Biking on hiking trails is prohibited except on the bicycle route portion of Hefren Run Trail.

**HORSEBACK RIDING:** A loop trail begins at a small parking lot on Forest Drive, connects to Old Logging Road, and winds through beautiful pine plantations. Twenty-four miles of additional trails are located downstream of Gravel Lick Bridge in the Clarion River Lands.

**PICNICKING:** Picnic tables and charcoal grills are available throughout the park. Picnic pavilions may be reserved up to 11 months in advance for a fee. Unreserved picnic pavilions are free on a first-come, first-served basis. Pavilions 1, 2, and River Road are ADA accessible.

**FISHING:** The Clarion River provides fishing for trout, warmwater game fish, and panfish. Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission regulations and laws apply.

About 2.5 miles of Toms Run is stocked with trout. A special fishing pond stocked with trout is located by the park office and is available for use by children ages 15 and younger, and people with disabilities. An ADA accessible pier provides access.

**SCENIC VIEWS:** Two scenic views are along Fire Tower Road, about 1.5 miles from PA Route 36.

The rock ledges of Seneca Point Overlook give a view of the Clarion River Valley. The rock ledges are hazardous. Do not walk or climb on the rock outcroppings outside of the fenced area.

**Stay the Night**

**CAMPING: full-hookup, electric, and non-electric sites**  
The campground opens the second Friday in April and closes the third Sunday in October. The park has 210 campsites, each with a picnic table and fire ring. Electric only sites are available with either 30- or 50-amp hookups. Full-hookup campsites have on-site water, 50-amp electric, and sewage hookup. Shower houses, coin-operated laundry facilities, and a sanitary dump station are available. Pets are permitted at designated sites for a fee.

**Enjoy the Winter**

**ICE SKATING:** A lighted ice skating area is along River Road. **Ice thickness is not monitored.** For your safety, make sure ice is at least 4" thick for a single skater and 7" thick for a small group. Always carry safety equipment.

An 88-foot climb up Old No. 9 Fire Tower gives a breathtaking view of the entire area. On a clear day, points up to 15 to 20 miles away can be seen.

**BOATING:** The Clarion River provides approximately 120 miles of paddling opportunities. Located within the federally designated Wild and Scenic River section, river miles 38-58 are within Cook Forest State Park and the Clarion River Lands. The park provides access to the river with three hand-carry public launches with parking (miles 58, 54, and 50). Required launch permits can be purchased at the park office.

Popular paddling trips are from Clear Creek State Park (mile 61), Barnett Launch (mile 58), and Four-mile Launch (mile 54) to Cooksburg Launch (mile 50). Overnight parking is available with a no cost permit obtained at the park office. For paddlers traveling overnight on the river, there are two canoe-in campsites at Thompsons Eddy, reservable for a fee, for one night only. See the **River Camping** section for additional information.

Canoes, kayaks, and tubes are available for rent from private businesses nearby. To plan a float on the Clarion River and to review paddling safety tips and regulations, see the Clarion River Water Trail map at the park office or at: <https://pbc.pa.gov/WaterTrail.htm>.

The Clarion River is a Class 1 river, a beginner's waterway with slower moving water and a few faster riffles and waves. As the water level rises from weather events, the difficulty navigating the river and velocity of the water changes as well. When the United States Geological Survey (USGS) river gauge at Cooksburg reads 6 feet, the park closes its launches. River height can be checked at the USGS site: <https://waterdata.usgs.gov/pa/nwis>.

Motorboats must display a current boat registration. Non-powered boats launched in the park must display one of the following:

**CABINS:** The cabins open the second Friday in April and close the third Friday in December. Two cabin colonies provide rustic, minimally furnished cabins that sleep 4, 6, 8, or 10 people. Occupants must provide their own bedding, cookware, and tableware. Frost-free water faucets are outside. A shower house is nearby. Four cabins are ADA accessible. Dogs are permitted in designated cabins for a fee.

**RIVER CAMPING:** A canoe/kayak camping area with three sites is at Thompson Eddy,

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.

**HUNTING AND FIREARMS:** Over 11,000 acres of Cook Forest State Park and Clarion River Lands are open to hunting, trapping, and the training of dogs during established seasons. Common game species are deer, squirrels, bears, and turkeys. Over 10,000 acres of adjacent state forests and over 500,000 acres of Allegheny National Forest are also open to hunting.

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

**Use extreme caution** with firearms at all times. Other visitors use the park during hunting seasons. Firearms and archery equipment used for hunting may be unsecured 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.

**SAWMILL CENTER FOR THE ARTS:** A local, non-profit craft organization housed in the historic sawmill offers traditional crafts in a gift shop. Demonstrations and classes on various crafts are presented throughout the summer and fall. The Verna Leith Sawmill Theater presents plays, musicals, and other entertainment throughout the summer season. 814-927-6655. [www.sawmill.org](http://www.sawmill.org)

downstream of Gravel Lick Bridge. This area is for individuals and groups traveling on the Clarion River by canoe or kayak. Use of this area is limited to one night and is for tent use only. Cost is based per person, and group size is limited to 10 people per site.

**ORGANIZED GROUP TENTING:** Organized groups can rent this rustic area year round. Access in the winter months may be difficult. The four sites each accommodate 20 people.

**SLEDDING:** A slope is available for sledding near the ice skating area along River Road.

**LEARN, EXPERIENCE, CONNECT**

Cook Forest State Park offers a wide variety of programs year round. Programs cover varied topics like old growth forest ecology, river ecology, history, and guided tours. The Log Cabin Environmental Learning Classroom offers indoor space for programs.

Displays feature historic logging and rafting tools, models, and artifacts.

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 also offered for teachers.

Contact the park office or explore the online calendar of events, <https://events.dcnr.pa.gov>, for more information on programs and other learning experiences.

**NEARBY ATTRACTIONS**

Information on nearby attractions is available from: the Pennsylvania Great Outdoors Visitors Bureau, 814-849-5197. <https://VisitPAgo.com>  
Cook Forest Vacation Bureau, 412-353-9620. [www.CookForest.org](http://www.CookForest.org)  
**Clear Creek State Park** encompasses 1,901 acres in Jefferson County. The park

occupies a scenic portion of the Clear Creek Valley from PA 949 downstream to the Clarion River and offers camping, swimming, hiking, fishing, cabins, yurts, canoeing, hunting, and picnicking. 814-752-2368

**Clear Creek State Forest** covers 14,431 acres and provides hunting, fishing, camping, and hiking. Much of the state forest is along

the Clarion and Allegheny rivers. 814-226-1901

**Allegheny National Forest.** Pennsylvania's only national forest, is approximately 517,000 acres and includes land in Elk, Forest, McKean, and Warren counties. 814-728-6100

**NATURAL RESOURCES**
**OLD GROWTH TIMBER AREAS**

There are eleven old growth areas in the park, totaling over 2,300 acres. Most stands are dominated by ancient eastern hemlocks and white pines, but also contain ancient understory trees like white and chestnut oaks, black cherries, red maples, and cucumber trees. Many white pine and hemlock trees in these areas approach 375 years old. Scientists believe these old growth areas began growing following a large forest fire in 1644. Some trees survived the fire and date back to the early 1500s.

**FOREST CATHEDRAL NATURAL AREA**

The Forest Cathedral Natural Area is home to one of the finest stands of big and tall white pines and eastern hemlocks in the Northeastern U.S. Many of these magnificent pine and hemlock trees exceed three feet in

diameter with the tallest pines approaching 180 feet. It is fitting that this forest remains in the midst of the area that saw the greatest logging boom in the history of Pennsylvania. In the late 1800s, thousands of acres of old growth forests were cut for construction industries. The Forest Cathedral is a National Natural Landmark and has been set aside for protection as a state park natural area.

**CLARION RIVER**

Thirteen miles of the Clarion River flow through the park. The river corridor contains plants like cardinal flowers, rhododendrons, mountain laurels, and many species of old growth trees. Possible wildlife sightings include deer, wild turkeys, ruffed grouse, river otters, muskrats, porcupines, and black bears. Great blue herons, mergansers, kingfishers, and bald eagles are also common.

**HISTORY**

John Cook was the first permanent American settler to the area. He arrived in 1826 to determine the feasibility of building an east to west canal along the Clarion River for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. John purchased 765 acres and settled with his wife and 10 children in 1828. At the mouth of Toms Run, present day Cooksburg, John built his one-story cabin and the first of many water-driven sawmills. He worked his mills, logged with oxen, rafted logs to Pittsburgh, and also engaged in flatboat building through the years.

One of John's sons, Anthony, bought 36 acres from his father and then gained the rest of the acreage when his father died in 1858. Anthony erected three sawmills, one flouring mill, one planing mill, a boat scaffold, several dwellings, and a store. Around 1870, he built the Cook Homestead, now known as the Inn at Cook Forest, at the corner of land where PA 36 and River Road intersect. Many of the large homes on River Road are still maintained by the Cook Family and descendants. After Anthony's death, the business was managed under A. Cook Sons Company.

Anthony Cook's son, Anthony Wayne, spearheaded a 17-year campaign to save the last remaining old growth timber in Cook Forest. To help raise the final funds to purchase the land from the A. Cook Sons Company, the Cook Forest Association formed in 1926 and was endorsed by Governor Gifford Pinchot, the Honorable Simon B. Elliott, and natural resource groups. In 1928, Cook Forest became the first state park acquired to preserve a natural area. The Forest Cathedral was designated a National Natural Landmark in 1968.

**CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS**


On March 31, 1933, President Franklin D. Roosevelt created the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) to provide employment and restore our nation's natural resources.

In 1934, CCC Camp SP-2 was built in the present-day River Cabins Area along River Road. This camp with barracks, mess hall, and shower houses served 200 enrollees and staff until it closed in 1937. The buildings

were moved in 1937 and used to construct CCC Camp SP-6 at Raccoon Creek State Park in Beaver County.

Work of the CCC in Cook Forest still remains. Indian and River cabins were built, trails and roads constructed, and forest resources preserved by these hard-working men.

**HISTORIC AREAS**
**LOG CABIN ENVIRONMENTAL LEARNING CLASSROOM:**

This large log building was built in 1934 by the CCC. It was used as living quarters and then as a restaurant. The building is currently an environmental learning classroom with displays, taxidermy animals, and logging tools from early lumbering days.

**RIVER AND INDIAN CABINS:** In the 1930s, the CCC constructed these buildings from salvaged American chestnut killed by blight. These buildings were added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1987.

**MEMORIAL FOUNTAIN:** Built in 1950 on Longfellow Trail, the fountain was dedicated to the original members of the Cook Forest Association who were instrumental in raising additional funds needed to purchase the land from the A. Cook Sons Company.

**OLD NO. 9 FIRE TOWER/SENECA POINT OVERLOOK:** The 87.5-foot fire tower, built in 1929 by the commonwealth's Department of Forests and Waters, gave firefighters a 15- to 20-mile view of the area. The tower was retired from service in 1966. Periodically, the observation cabin on top of the tower is open during programs.

At Seneca Point Overlook, look for bowl shaped depressions in the bedrock which are believed to have been made by grinding acorns by prehistoric peoples of the Woodland Period (2850 BC – 1050 AC). Cook Forest State Park is home to six known sites of significance to American Indians. These sites contain petroglyphs and stone carvings.

**COBBTOWN AND BRACKET DAMS:** The stone and earthen foundations of bracket dams can be found along the banks of

Toms Run. One set of remains can be observed upstream from the Swinging Bridge. Bracket dams created an artificial flood to raise the water level for floating logs to the Clarion River.

Two and a half miles up Toms Run Road are the scant remains of Cobbtown, one of many temporary logging boomtowns of the area. This town was in operation from 1861 to the 1890s.


**INFORMATION AND RESERVATIONS**

**Cook Forest State Park**  
100 Route 36  
Cooksburg, PA 16217  
814-744-8407  
[CookForestSP@pa.gov](mailto:CookForestSP@pa.gov)  
An Equal Opportunity Employer  
[www.visitPAparks.com](http://www.visitPAparks.com)

**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.

**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**

Clarion Hospital  
1 Hospital Drive  
Clarion, PA 16214  
814-226-9500

**Make online reservations at**  
[www.visitPAparks.com](http://www.visitPAparks.com) or call toll-free 888-PA-PARKS (888-727-2757), 7:00 AM to 5:00 PM, Monday to Saturday.

If you need an accommodation to participate in park activities due to a disability, please contact the park you plan to visit.

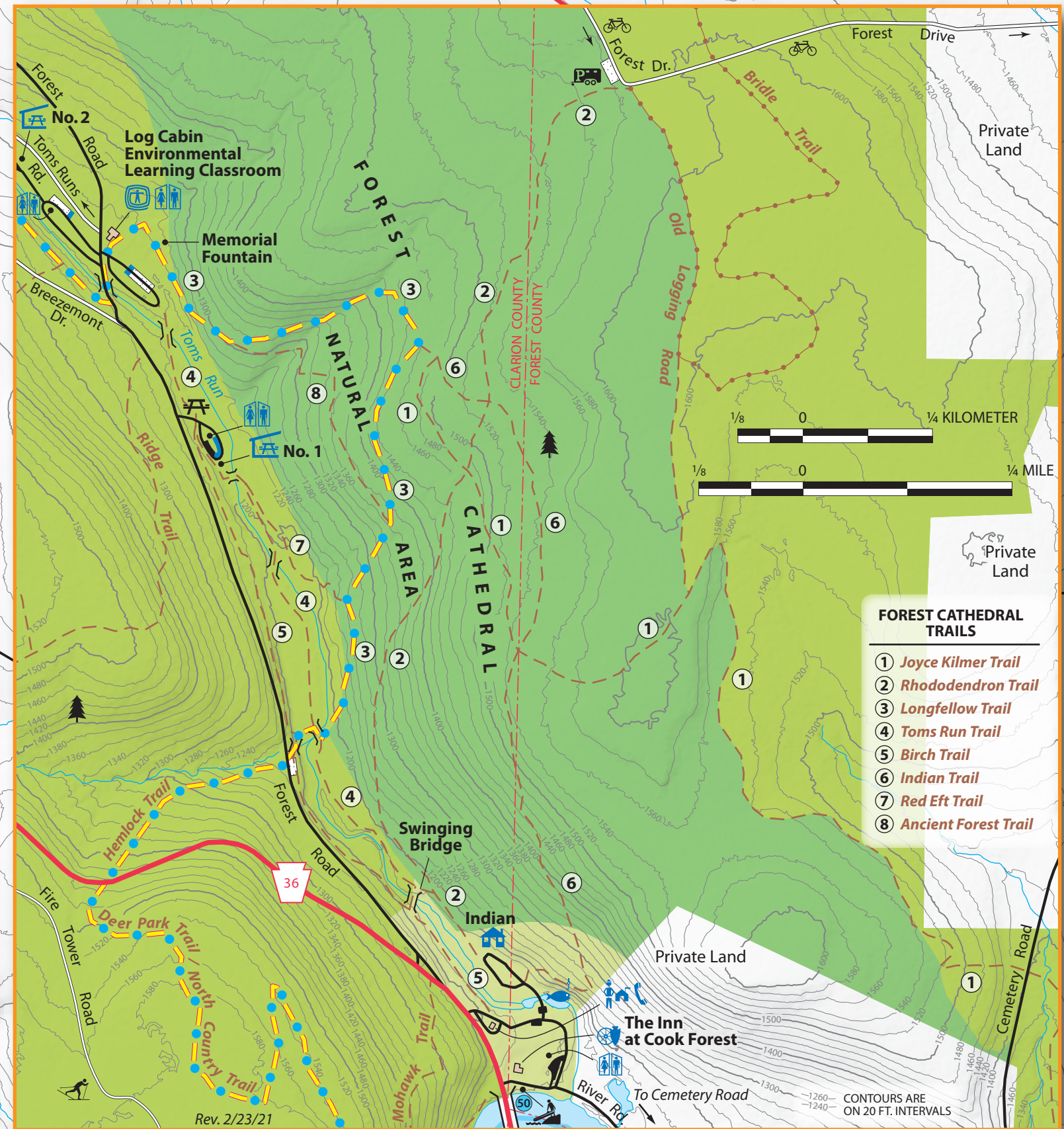
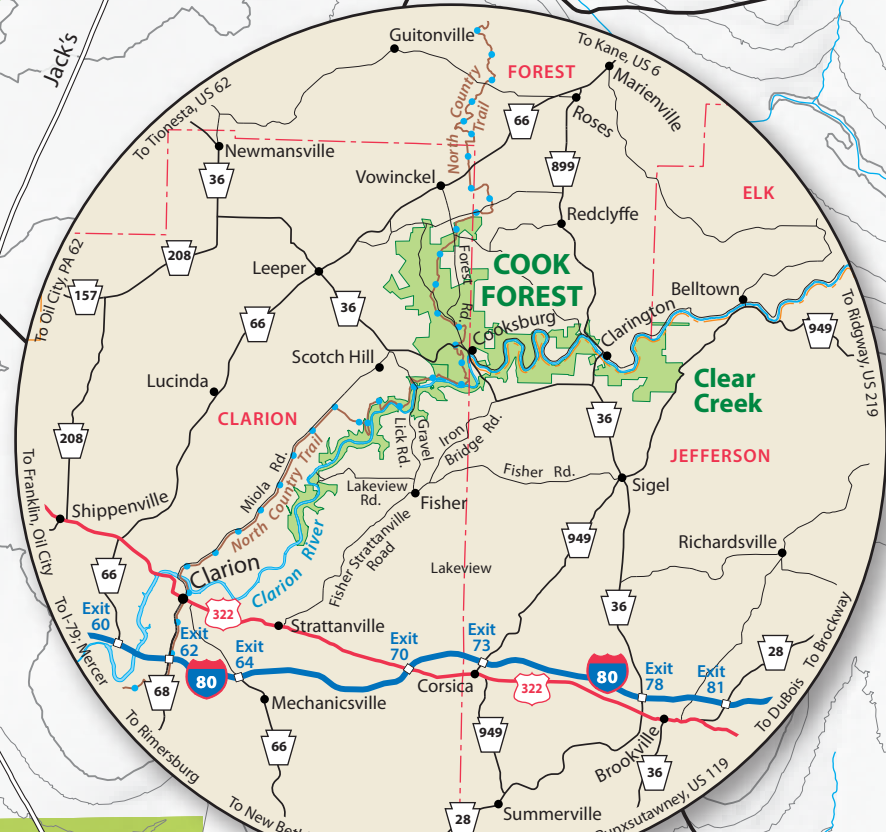
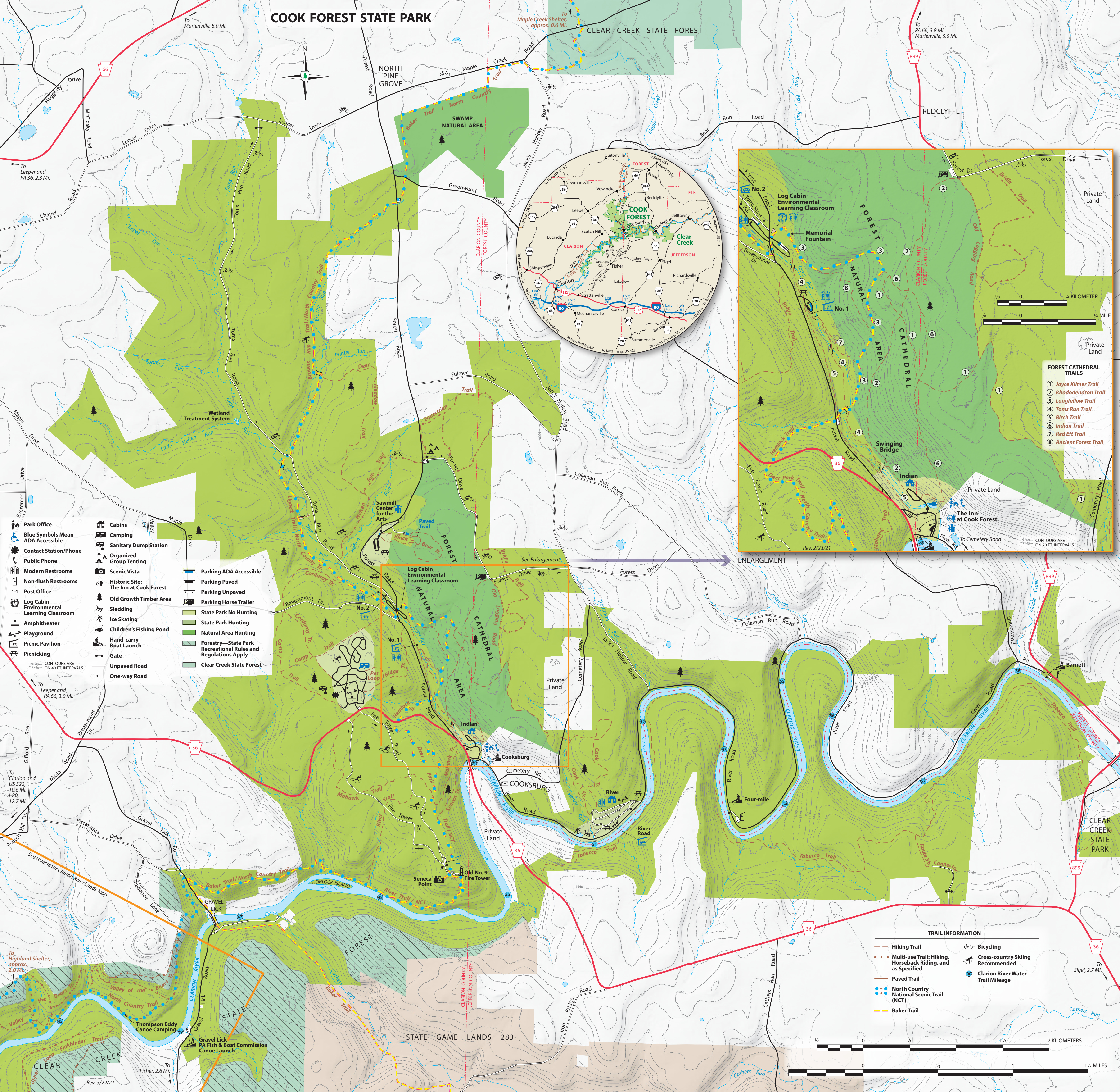

**Protect and Preserve our Parks**

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.
- Please camp only in designated areas and minimize your impact on the campsite.
- Firewood Advisory: Firewood may contain non-native insects and plant diseases. Bringing firewood into the park from other areas may accidentally spread pest insects and diseases that threaten park resources and the health of our forests. Use local firewood. Do not take wood home and do not leave firewood. Burn it!
- Prevent forest fires by having a fire in proper facilities and properly disposing of hot coals. Do not leave a fire unattended.



# COOK FOREST STATE PARK



- FOREST CATHEDRAL TRAILS**
- 1 Joyce Kilmer Trail
  - 2 Rhododendron Trail
  - 3 Longfellow Trail
  - 4 Toms Run Trail
  - 5 Birch Trail
  - 6 Indian Trail
  - 7 Red Elf Trail
  - 8 Ancient Forest Trail

- Park Office**  
Blue Symbols Mean ADA Accessible  
Contact Station/Phone  
Public Phone  
Modern Restrooms  
Non-flush Restrooms  
Post Office  
Log Cabin Environmental Learning Classroom  
Amphitheater  
Playground  
Picnic Pavilion  
Picnicking
- Cabins**  
Camping  
Sanitary Dump Station  
Organized Group Tenting  
Scenic Vista  
Historic Site: The Inn at Cook Forest  
Old Growth Timber Area  
Sledding  
Ice Skating  
Children's Fishing Pond  
Hand-carry Boat Launch  
Gate  
Unpaved Road  
One-way Road
- Parking ADA Accessible**  
Parking Paved  
Parking Unpaved  
Parking Horse Trailer  
State Park No Hunting  
State Park Hunting  
Natural Area Hunting  
Forestry—State Park Recreational Rules and Regulations Apply  
Clear Creek State Forest

- TRAIL INFORMATION**
- Hiking Trail
  - Multi-use Trail: Hiking, Horseback Riding, and as Specified
  - Paved Trail
  - North Country National Scenic Trail (NCT)
  - Baker Trail
  - Bicycling
  - Cross-country Skiing Recommended
  - Clarion River Water Trail Mileage

