

# OUTSTANDING GEOLOGIC FEATURE OF PENNSYLVANIA

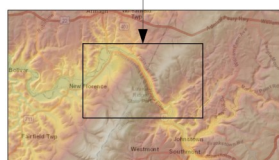
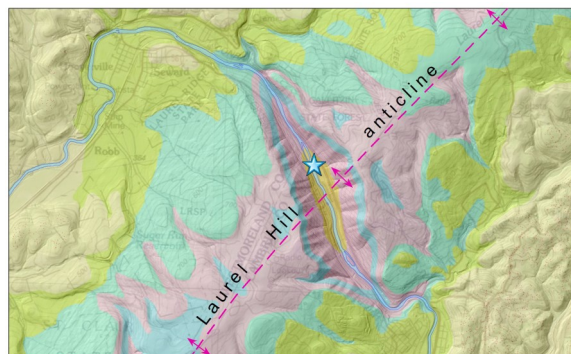
## CONEMAUGH GORGE, WESTMORELAND, INDIANA, AND CAMBRIA COUNTIES



Stuart O. Reese, 2016

### Location

Laurel Ridge State Park, Pa. Route 56, Westmoreland, Indiana, and Cambria Counties, lat: 40.36641, lon: -78.95913 (roadside pull off); lat: 40.3977, lon: -78.9762; Vintondale 7.5-minute quadrangle



0 1 2 Mi



### Geology

The Conemaugh Gorge is a scenic, deep cut through Laurel Hill ridge. Average topographic relief is about 1,330 feet from the peak of the ridge to the Conemaugh River. Like the Youghiogheny River about 45 miles to the southwest, the Conemaugh River has eroded through flat-lying sandstones, siltstones, and shales at the crest of an anticline (upfold) to form a magnificent gorge over 4 miles in length. The crest of Laurel Hill corresponds with the axis of the anticline. It is likely that the gorge was cut in the manner of other water gaps in Pennsylvania, from headward erosion of streams through zones of weakness. At the Conemaugh Gorge, the cut is fairly straight across Laurel Hill and may have followed a significant structural trend across the anticline. Massive sandstones of the Pottsville Formation (Pennsylvanian age) form the rim of the gorge, and progressively older rocks are exposed toward the center of the gorge, where grayish-red sandstone, siltstone, and shale of the Devonian Catskill Formation lie at the core of the anticline.



View of the Conemaugh Gorge to the north-northwest from the scenic overlook along Pa. Route 56. Laurel Ridge State Park lies to the west of Pa. Route 56. The 70-mile-long Laurel Highlands Hiking Trail crosses over the summit (left in the photograph). The Conemaugh River occupies the center of the valley and flows to the northwest before bending to the west and southwest at the northern end of the gorge. Photograph by Richard Campbell, Pennsylvania Geological Survey intern.

### Recommended Reading

[Laurel Ridge State Park](#) web page of DCNR.

[Gallitzen State Forest](#) web page of DCNR.

Published by the [Pennsylvania Geological Survey](#).

