

# OUTSTANDING GEOLOGIC FEATURE OF PENNSYLVANIA

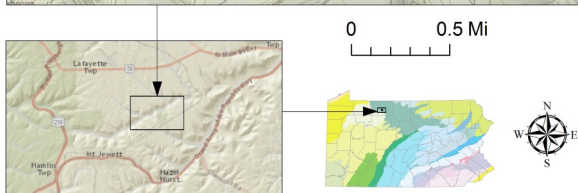
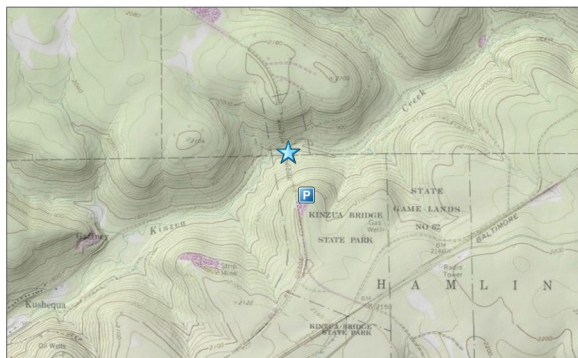
## KINZUA GORGE, MCKEAN COUNTY

Stuart O. Reese, 2016



### Location

Kinzua Bridge State Park, McKean Co., Keating Twp., lat: 41.75944, lon: -78.58699 (parking); Cyclone 7.5-minute quadrangle



### Geology

Kinzua gorge is located in the Deep Valleys section of the Appalachian Plateaus physiographic province. Local relief is 300 to 400 feet. The valley floor and lower slopes are underlain by Mississippian- and Devonian-age sandstones and siltstones of the Shenango through Oswayo Formations, undivided. These rocks are overlain by sandstones and conglomerates of the Pennsylvanian-age Pottsville Formation, which forms the upper slopes and ridges.

The gorge is the location of the famous Kinzua Viaduct, which at one time was the highest (301 feet) and longest (2,053 feet) railroad viaduct in the world. The viaduct was first constructed of iron in 1882 as a shortcut across Kinzua Valley, and it was rebuilt with steel in 1900 to accommodate heavier trains. On July 21, 2003, a tornado took out 11 support towers of the bridge. In 2011, a pedestrian walkway was added so visitors could look out over Kinzua gorge.

The Kinzua Bridge area and almost all of McKean County have not been glaciated. Bedrock units are mostly Devonian, Mississippian, and Pennsylvanian sedimentary rocks of sandstone, siltstone, and shale, with relatively minor amounts of limestone, claystone, and bituminous coal. The rocks in the region are gently folded. Fold axes trend northeast.



Above: View of the Kinzua Bridge before its destruction by the tornado (Commonwealth Media Services).

Right: After the tornado, the twisted frame of the viaduct lay on the valley floor (photograph from Pennsylvania Bureau of State Parks).



### Recommended Reading

[Kinzua Bridge State Park](#) web page of DCNR.

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

