

RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Spend the Day

PICNICKING: Two picnic areas provide tables and restrooms. A woodland picnic area is near the park office at the beginning of the Old Elm Trail. The Prairie Picnic Pavilion Area overlooks the relict prairie. The pavilion seats 50 people and may be reserved up to 11 months in advance for a fee. If unreserved, the picnic pavilion is free on a first-come, first-served basis. 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.

HUNTING AND FIREARMS: Just over 26 acres are open to hunting and the training of dogs during established seasons. Common game species are woodcock, squirrel, turkey, and deer.

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 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.

Enjoy the Winter

CROSS-COUNTRY SKIING: All trails north of PA 528 (prairie side) are recommended for cross-country skiing.

SNOWSHOEING: All trails are suitable for snowshoeing, which is popular at Jennings. Snowshoes are available to borrow Monday through Saturday when there is adequate snow cover. Call ahead for snow conditions.



HISTORY

Legacy of the Land

The Paleo-Indian People were the first humans in the area. Arriving about 15,000 years ago, these nomadic hunters followed the retreating face of the glacier in search of wooly mammoths and giant ground sloths. The constant pursuit of these giant animals is believed to have helped force the animals to extinction. Little is known of the early cultures that inhabited the area after the Paleo-Indian People.

By the end of the 16th century, the Seneca Nation of Indians, the largest nation of the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois Confederacy), controlled the area. Among the first people to develop innovative land management techniques, the Seneca used fire to open areas to plant crops, which may have helped sustain prairie openings.

The Venango Trail lies near PA 528, a major road dividing the park. One of many paths created by Indigenous people, the trail connected the areas that are now Pittsburgh and Franklin and was later traveled by historic figures like Tecumseh, George Washington, and Lafayette.

The 1800s brought an influx of European colonizers who forcibly removed native people, altered the landscape, and depleted the resources through lumbering, agriculture, and hunting. While exhausting the resources above the ground, succeeding generations began to look below the surface. Coal mining became a booming industry during this era. While mining provided a needed source of energy, techniques of that day left significant scars on the land.

At Jennings today, it is hard to see the scars from previous uses of the land. As educators, the Jennings staff strives to help people understand how we continue to be a product of our environment and need to make informed decisions concerning the immediate and long-term effects of our actions. The decisions we make today about how to use the land will leave our legacy for future generations.

Otto Emery Jennings

The park is named in honor of one of Pennsylvania’s most renowned botanists, Dr. Otto Emery Jennings. Dr. Jennings explored western Pennsylvania with the “energy of

a pioneer” and acquainted many with the botanical treasures he encountered.

Dr. Jennings first observed the prairie in 1905. Thanks to a generous donation from the Butler Garden Club, he initiated the purchase and protection of the area by the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, a private conservation group. The conservancy was instrumental in establishing environmental education at Jennings.

By teaching others to appreciate Pennsylvania’s unique natural areas, Dr. Jennings helped to ensure that this and other special areas would be preserved for future generations. Almost a century later, park staff continue to teach others in this tradition.

Foltz School

This one-room, township school was built in the late 1880s, on the site of a former log school. After over 75 years of classes, the school closed in 1963. The building is currently being restored.

HIKING: 5 miles

Jennings offers many hiking opportunities that traverse varying terrain and diverse habitats. Visitors may walk through over 300 acres of forest and prairie. The trail system is designed as a series of loops, with trail signs at every intersection, making it possible to choose a variety of hiking experiences. Trails are designed for foot traffic only. Bicycles and motorized vehicles are prohibited. Pets are permitted, but must remain on a leash at all times.

Prairie Trails

The eastern prairie is a rare ecosystem that is home to the endangered massasauga rattlesnake. Although this small and reclusive snake is very timid, it is venomous and visitors should be careful when walking through its home. Stay on the mowed paths and be alert to reduce the chances of an unexpected encounter.

Blazing Star Trail: 0.22 mile, easiest hiking

Named for the beautiful wildflower that turns the prairie purple in late July and early August, this self-guided trail travels through the middle of the prairie. Follow the educational signs and discover how the prairie was formed and why it is unique.

Deer Trail: 0.35 mile, easiest hiking

Accessed via Blazing Star Trail, this short, flat, wide loop trail travels through an area where trees were removed to open the forest canopy, expanding the prairie and oak savannah ecosystem. This important resource management effort provides additional habitat for a variety of wildlife, including the endangered massasauga rattlesnake.

Prairie Loop Trail: 0.28 mile, easiest hiking

Accessed from Blazing Star Trail, this short loop is recommended for viewing wildflowers in the summer and fall and for cross-country skiing in the winter.

Woodland Trails

Black Cherry Trail: 0.5 mile, easiest hiking

This loop trail travels through both upland and bottomland and is good habitat for spring wildflowers, ferns, and birds. For a short distance, the trail follows Big Run, a small stream that flows through the park.

Glacier Ridge Trail: 0.31 mile, easiest hiking

This trail is part of a 15-mile trail that links Jennings to Moraine State Park. It travels through some of the most scenic woodlands of Jennings. More information about this trail is available at the park office.

Hepatica Trail: 0.26 mile, easiest hiking

Spring wildflowers, such as the fragile hepatica, can be seen along this connecting trail that links Oakwoods Trail to Glacier Ridge Trail.

Massasauga Trail: 0.47 mile, easiest hiking

Starting in the prairie, this trail soon enters a mixed hardwood forest of predominately oak and hickory. The dry forest soon drops into the damp, scenic Big Run Valley, providing an opportunity to observe barred owls, before rising again to meet Deer Trail.

Oakwoods Trail: 1.2 miles, easiest hiking

This is the longest trail at Jennings and covers varying terrain and several different types of habitat, including an area recently influenced by beavers. It can be accessed from Deer Trail or Massasauga Trail. Unique to this trail are several pits, believed to be excavated in the 19th century for ore-bearing clay, which was taken to local iron furnaces. In early spring, listen for wood frogs “quacking” in the numerous seasonal pools just off this trail.

Old Elm Trail: 0.25 mile, easiest hiking

Starting west of the park office and connecting to Black Cherry Trail, this trail passes through an area of the park once dominated by large elm trees. Most succumbed to Dutch elm disease in the 1930s, leaving nothing but rotting logs behind.

Old Field Trail: 0.18 mile, easiest hiking

A connecting trail which links Deer Trail to Oakwoods Trail, Old Field Trail passes through an area dominated by hawthorns and other small shrubs. This is evidence that the area was a farm field many years ago.

Old Mill Trail: 0.14 mile, easiest hiking

Accessed by following Woodwhisper Trail for 0.04 mile, this trail connects the park office to Black Cherry Trail and passes by the remains of a 19th-century sawmill.

Ridge Trail: 0.68 mile, more difficult hiking

This rough, wooded trail passes through an area open to hunting and can be an interesting extension to Black Cherry Trail. Large boulders and rocky terrain highlight this steep trail.

Wetland Kiosk Trail: 0.04 mile, easiest hiking

Accessed by following Woodwhisper Trail for 0.08 mile, this short, extension trail leads to an educational kiosk overlooking a passive wetland treatment site.

Woodwhisper Trail: 0.16 mile, easiest hiking

Popular with people with strollers, this flat loop travels through an upland, mixed hardwood forest. A short spur trail leads to an educational kiosk overlooking a passive wetland treatment site.

North Country National Scenic Trail: 0.9 mile in the park, easiest hiking

This National Scenic Trail passes through Jennings and utilizes several woodland trails, including Glacier Ridge, Ridge, and Black Cherry. This blue-blazed trail system links North Dakota to Vermont, traveling through eight states and over 4,700 miles. More information on the North Country National Scenic Trail is available at the center office. www.nps.gov/noco

INFORMATION AND RESERVATIONS

Jennings Environmental Education Center

2951 Prospect Road
Slippery Rock, PA 16057-5023
724-794-6011
JenningsSP@pa.gov

An Equal Opportunity Employer
www.dcnr.pa.gov/StateParks
[@JenningsEEC](#)

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.

Electric Vehicle Charging Station

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

Nearby Attractions

Information on nearby attractions is available from the Butler County Tourism and Convention Bureau. www.visitbutlercounty.com

Moraine State Park adjoins Jennings and features Lake Arthur, a 3,225-acre lake that is a representation of a glacial lake that once covered most of the surrounding area. Moraine offers boating, hiking, biking, picnicking, swimming, and cabins for overnight visits. 724-368-8811

Located in Lawrence County near the intersection of US 19 and US 422, **McConnells Mill State Park** encompasses the spectacular 930-acre Slippery Rock Creek Gorge, a National Natural Landmark. 724-368-8811

The **Jacksville (Miller) Esker** is a serpentine shaped deposit of sand and gravel formed during the melting of a glacier. Also locally known as the West Liberty Hogback, it is the best remaining example of an esker in Pennsylvania. This Western Pennsylvania Conservancy property is along West Liberty Road, about five miles from Jennings. 412-288-2777

The 115-acre **Wolf Creek Narrows Natural Area** is known for its spectacular spring wildflowers. The natural area, managed by the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, is located is two miles outside of the town of Slippery Rock where West Water Street crosses Wolf Creek. 412-288-2777

A historic inn and museum of rural life, the **Old Stone House** borders Jennings on the east side of PA 8. The house is operated by Slippery Rock University. 724-738-4964

ARMCO Park is located 2 miles north of Jennings on PA 173 and features a public pool, splash zone, playground, play fields, and picnic shelters. 724-287-4733

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 center office.

NEAREST HOSPITAL

Butler Memorial Hospital
1 Hospital Way
Butler, PA 16001
724-283-6666



Woodcock - Photograph by MT Carrick

