

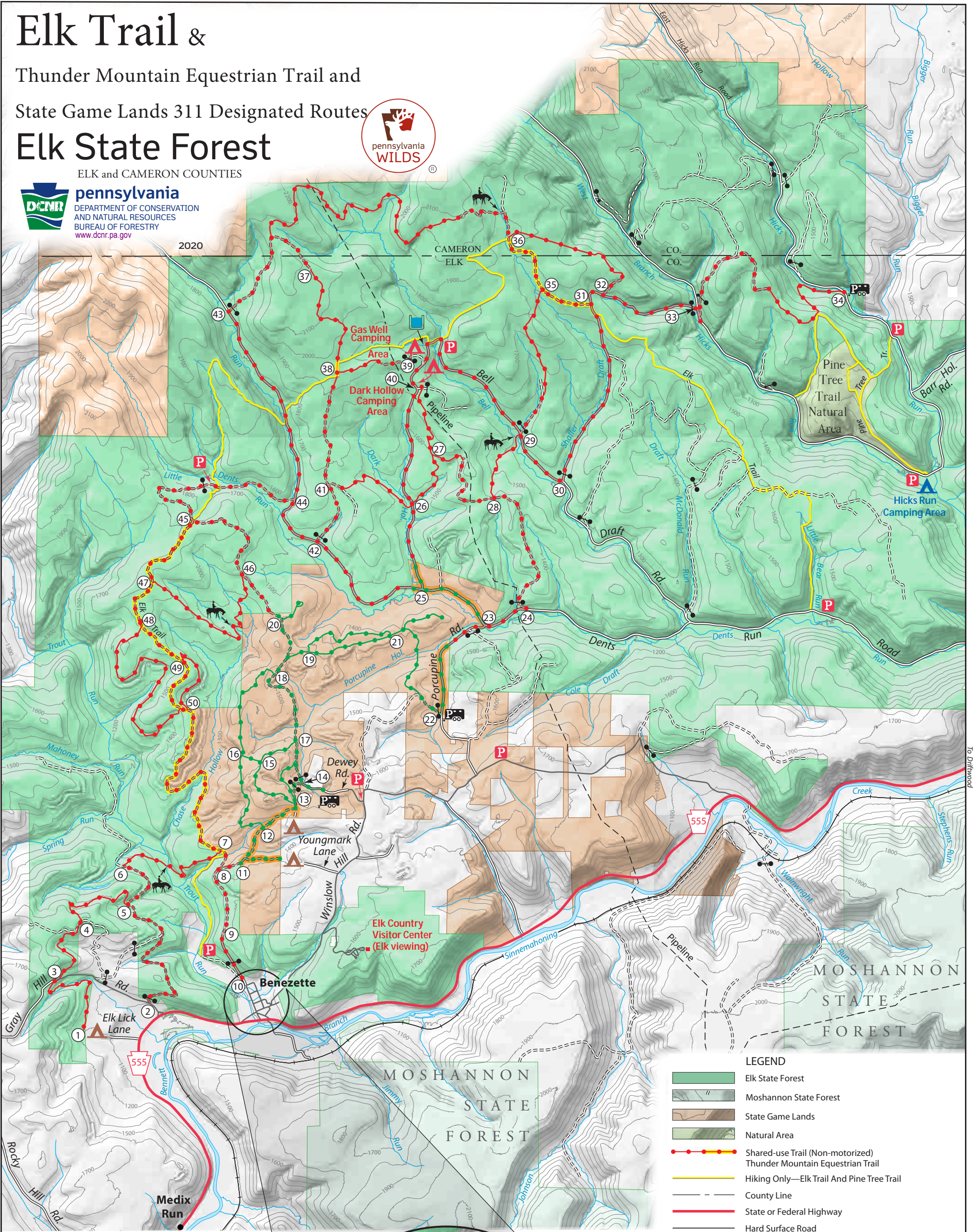
Elk Trail & Thunder Mountain Equestrian Trail and State Game Lands 311 Designated Routes

Elk State Forest

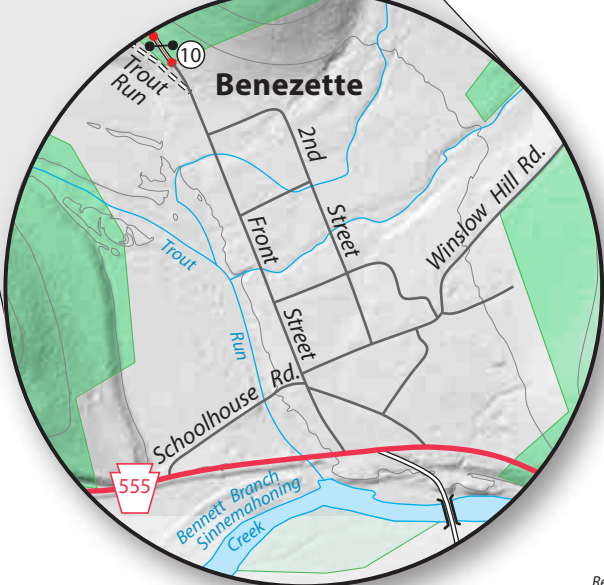
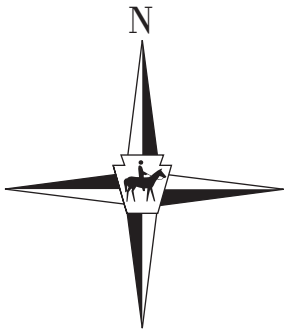
ELK and CAMERON COUNTIES



pennsylvania
DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION
AND NATURAL RESOURCES
BUREAU OF FORESTRY
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- LEGEND**
- Elk State Forest
 - Moshannon State Forest
 - State Game Lands
 - Natural Area
 - Shared-use Trail (Non-motorized)
Thunder Mountain Equestrian Trail
 - Hiking Only—Elk Trail And Pine Tree Trail
 - County Line
 - State or Federal Highway
 - Hard Surface Road
 - Improved Dirt Road
 - Administrative Road
 - PGC Designated Route
 - PGC Designated Route—Open All Year
 - Gate
 - Parking Area
 - Parking Horse Trailers
 - Pipeline R/W
 - Spring/non-potable Water
 - Horse-watering Site
 - Equestrian Camping
 - Camping
 - Private Camping
 - Intersection Number



Elk Trail

Elk State Forest



Pennsylvania's vast state forest system comprises 2.2 million acres for you to use, enjoy and explore. The Department of Conservation and Natural Resources' Bureau of Forestry manages these forests to ensure their long-term health and to conserve native wild plants.

Elk State Forest comprises 217,000 acres in Cameron, Elk, Potter, McKean, Clinton, and Clearfield Counties.



The Elk Trail

Elk Trail rewards the hiker with a variety of terrain and scenery as it weaves through the ridges and hollows of Elk County. The trail is approximately 15.8 miles long and marked in yellow – hiking only trail. The trail area is prime elk territory and the lucky hiker will be treated with an opportunity to see this majestic animal wild and free in its habitat.

Driving west on Dents Run Road, approximately two miles from Route 555, is the lower end of Bear Hollow. The trail begins here and follows the drainage to the top of the ridge between Dents Run and Hicks Run. The trail is actually an old wagon road from the late 1800's that was used by lumbermen. The Elk Trail is marked in yellow.

After a short hike on the relatively flat ridgetop, the trail joins a timber haul road. Follow the haul road in a northwesterly direction for about 3/4 of a mile. This haul road was built in the late 1960's for the removal of aspen logs and has been reused for timber and wildlife projects. The haul road follows a much older wagon road, known as "Snook's Trail" that began in the village of Dents Run and followed the ridge where you are now.

As you follow the haul road you will see a small clearing to the north. The Elk Trail goes through this clearing and joins another old trail known as Ridge Trail. The Elk Trail follows this old trail for about 1 1/4 miles. Along the way you will go through a "seed tree" cut where the trees were removed in the late 1970's. Some portions of this timber sale have regenerated in birch, beech, cherry and aspen. As you near the end of this section of the trail, you will see tree tops,

sections of logs, and skid trails from a timber sale that was completed in the early 1990s. You will then encounter another timber haul road leading to the west.

Following the haul road you will shortly encounter Shaffer Draft Road. This is a gated, low maintenance forest road that goes from the west branch of Hicks Run to Belle Draft Road. Follow Shaffer Draft Road to the northeast for a short distance before turning to the northwest and then proceed along the haul road. Along the way you will see a recently created food plot that is part of the ongoing elk habitat improvement program. In the same area you will notice that there are few trees among the laurel and fern. This area failed to regenerate following an aspen timber sale in 1978. Continuing you will pass through a stand of birch and mountain laurel followed by some thick hemlocks and boulders. Below and to the west of the trail there are several springs that drain into Shaffer Draft. In the vicinity of these springs, the trail turns abruptly to the west on an abandoned pipeline.

Follow the old pipeline uphill. You will notice that a lack of maintenance on the pipeline allowed the birch, mountain laurel, and hemlock to encroach. After you hike over the high point of this broad ridgetop the trail turns sharply to the southeast and leaves the pipeline.

After a short distance the trail joins a railroad grade from the logging era of the early 1900s. The trail goes gently downhill in a broad, sweeping turn to the west. If you look carefully you can see raised sections of ground where the cross-ties used to be. You may notice excavated areas where stones and soil were removed to build up the grade. You will also notice at the upper end of this section of trail that the mountain laurel and birch saplings crowd the sides of the trail. The second half of this section of trail follows a slight rocky hollow down toward Bell Draft Road. Just above Belle Draft Road, the trail leaves the old railroad grade and takes a more direct route down to the road.

Once you are on Bell Draft Road, you will notice the stream flowing to the south. This is Bell Draft and it is a high quality, native trout stream. Upstream you will notice a hunting cabin, one of over 200 leased campsites on Elk State Forest. Hiking to the west on the road, continue past a spring. The trail will enter the woods a short distance beyond the spring and will head north as you ascend a slightly rocky draw.



As you reach the top of the ridge the trail will turn to the west and follow the contour until you reach a small intermittent stream. The trail will travel north along the waterway as it continues through mixed oak forest to the National Fuel Gas Pipeline. The trail crosses the stream on the pipeline but immediately turns west to proceed up Log Slide Hollow.

Near the head of Log Slide Hollow, the trail meets an old wagon road known as the Patterson Hollow Trail. The Elk Trail follows Patterson Hollow Trail only a short distance before turning abruptly to the west. If you miss this turn in the trail you will come to a recently constructed timber haul road and log landing.

You will continue to the west through a beech, maple, and mixed oak forest and eventually join a faint wagon road that, after passing through some laurel, dips down into another small hollow. In this hollow you will see some rocky terrain that may make hiking difficult as you continue downhill to Dents Run Road.

Proceed south on Dents Run Road a short distance before turning to the west. You will have to cross Dents Run which shouldn't be too difficult under normal conditions. After crossing the stream, the trail again makes use of an old wagon road. This road angles up the side of the hill on the west side of Dents Run. You will be able to see where this old road was dug into the side of the hill. At the crest of the hill, the mountain laurel begins and the traces of the old trail are too indistinct to follow.

From here the trail stays along the top of the ridge for about 1/2 mile. Initially the trail is surrounded by mountain laurel. This gradually gives way to a maple, oak, and birch forest with a dense understory of hay-scented fern. After topping a small crest on the ridge, a patch of hemlocks is visible to the west. The trail passes downhill through the hemlocks to the head of the drainage.

This drainage is called Emery Draft or Orchard Hollow. The trail follows the hollow, eventually joining a faint wagon road that gradually becomes more obvious. This hollow is very rocky and may make hiking slow and deliberate. Near the mouth of the hollow, the wagon road swings low around the point to the east. The trail departs to the southwest and crosses the hollow near several hunting cabins and joins the access road for these cabins.

Following the access road, the trail crosses Little Dents Run on a small wooden bridge and continues uphill for a short distance. Then, the camp access road turns to the east but the trail crosses the road and starts up Oil Derrick Hollow to the southwest. At the top of the hollow the ground begins to flatten and the trail continues to the southwest. The trail is now following another old wagon road and crosses over the ridge and enters a log landing on a haul road.

From here, the trail follows a timber haul road. There was a timber sale here in 1984, followed by a gypsy moth salvage cut in 1992, and a reproduction cut in 1996. Some of these areas were fenced to reduce the deer browsing damage. You will drop onto a long, flat area covered with grass, which is a strip mine that was reclaimed in the 1980's. At the end of the road, you will see a gate at our boundary line.

Care for the Land

State forests belong to all Pennsylvanians. Take time to enjoy them, but know the rules and regulations designed to protect the forests and you. Please be careful with fire, keep our forests litter free, and don't damage trees and other plants.

Dual Certified Forest

Pennsylvania's 2.2-million-acre state forest system is certified under Forest Stewardship Council™ and Sustainable Forestry Initiative® standards.

Dual certification ensures that Pennsylvania's state forests are managed to the highest third-party standards.



The mark of
responsible forestry

For more information

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Forest District #13

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