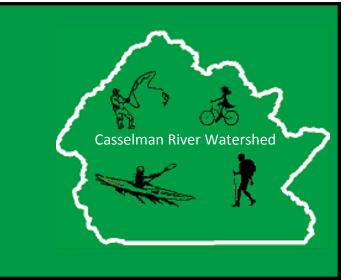
Casselman River Watershed

Boating and Recreation Guide



The Casselman River Watershed Boating and Recreation Guide is unique in that it highlights important features of the waterways, local points of interest, and recreational opportunities throughout the entire Casselman River watershed. Expanding upon the traditional corridor-oriented water trails, which typically feature river put-in and take-out sites and features along the river corridor, the Casselman River Watershed Boating and Recreation Guide identifies additional outdoor recreational opportunities and facilities located throughout the entire watershed

ON TRAILHEAD TON SCHOOL RD.

For your safety and enjoyment:

- Always wear a life jacket
- Obtain proper instruction in boating skills
- Know fishing and boating regulations
- Be prepared for river hazards
- Carry proper equipment

Disclaimer

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Casselman River Watershed

Beginning in the Savage River State Forest in Garrett County, Maryland, the Casselman River flows north 65 miles into Somerset County, Pennsylvania and is a major tributary to the Youghiogheny River. The Casselman River watershed, including Laurel Hill Creek, encompasses 525 square miles and converges with the Youghiogheny River near Confluence. Pennsylvania.

Playing a role in the early history of the United States, the name Turkeyfoot was first given to the area near the mouth of the river on May 21, 1754 by a Native American guide who was traveling with Colonel George Washington and a small party. At the confluence of Laurel Hill Creek, Casselman River, and Youghiogheny River, the guide pointed out that when the three waterways merged, they formed the shape of a turkey's foot. The name Turkeyfoot Valley is still commonly used when referring to this area in the watershed; even the local school district is recognized by this name.

The watershed is located in a region of Pennsylvania often referred to as Pittsburgh's playground, but it is also handy to Washington, DC and other urban centers. As part of the "Laurel Highlands", an area associated with Laurel Hill and Chestnut Ridge of the Allegheny Mountains, the watershed contains the highest point in Pennsylvania, Mt. Davis. It also features four state parks, two vacation resorts, many historical sites, and public state forests and game lands, which provide visitors and residents numerous recreational opportunities and a variety of activities to

Boating in the Casselman River Watershed

Both the Casselman River and Laurel Hill Creek offer canoeing and kayaking opportunities. The degree of difficulty in boating the waters within the watershed varies, but it is highly recommended that only boaters with experience on fast moving streams that require precise boat control attempt to paddle these waters. A thorough knowledge of hazards one might encounter for each section of stream paddled, appropriate requisite boating skills, and attention to safety are of the utmost importance. Consideration of water levels must always be taken into account as the character and difficulty of paddling a stream can change drastically with water levels. Check available resources such as weather, precipitation, USGS stream gauges, and local outfitters to plan accordingly. For the Casselman River, a gauge is located in Markleton and a reading of about 2.5 ft. to 3.5 ft. is usually sufficient for paddling most sections. A gauge is located on Laurel Hill Creek at Ursina, with minimum levels being around 2 ft. and high levels at 3.5 ft. to 4.5 ft. Low water levels can make paddling difficult and frustrating when water levels cause boats to drag and hang up in shallow water. High water levels can transform an easy stream or river segment to paddle into a very difficult and dangerous situation. Extreme caution should always be used when paddling high water. Closed-decked canoes and kayaks are recommended. Safety First!

The watershed also contains several lakes, which are regulated by the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission. Rules governing boating on lakes may differ so knowledge of the regulations for each lake is advised.

Pennsylvania Boating Regulations

- One wearable, Coast Guard approved personal floatation device (PFD or life jacket) in serviceable condition and of the appropriate size is required for each person in your boat. If you boat is 16 feet or longer, one throwable device (seat cushion or ring buoy) is required. Canoes and kayaks, regardless of length, are not required to carry a throwable device.
- Life jackets must be worn by all children 12 years and younger on all boats 20 feet or less in length while under way, and on all canoes and kayaks. Others are strongly encouraged to wear a life jacket at all times on the water.
- All boats must display an anchor light (a white light visible 360 degrees) when at anchor between sunset and sunrise. Boats can use a lantern or clip-on battery-powered unit to meet this requirement.
- All powered boats must show running lights between sunset and sunrise. Between sunset and sunrise, unpowered boats must carry a white light (visible 360 degrees), installed or portable, ready to be displayed in time to avoid a collision.
- All motorboats are required to carry a sound producing mechanical device audible for a half-mile. Athletic whistles meet this requirement. All motorboats must be registered regardless of where they launch.

Unpowered boats (canoes, kayaks, rowboats, rafts) using Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission access areas must either be registered OR display a valid launch permit. Launch permits can be purchased on the web at www.fish.state.pa.us.

Operating watercraft, including canoes, kayaks, and rafts, under the influence of alcohol or drugs is illegal. The law is strongly enforced for user safety. For further information on boating regulations, contact the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission at www.fish.state.pa.us.

River Classifications

River classification is a rating system that is used in determining the paddling difficulty of a waterway. There are six classifications. (Source: Canoeing Guide of Western Pennsylvania and Northern Virginia)

Class I Easy: These are fast-moving waters with riffles and small waves. Few obstructions block the flow, but are obvious and easily missed with little training.

Class II Novice: Straightforward rapids with wide, clear channels that are evident without scouting. Occasional maneuvering may be required; rocks and medium sized waves are easily missed by trained paddlers.

Class III Intermediate: Rapids with moderate, irregular waves, which may be difficult to avoid and can swamp an open canoe. Complex maneuvers in fast current and good boat control in tight passages or around ledges are often required. Large waves or strainers may be present but are easily avoidable. Strong eddies and powerful currents can be found, particularly on large-volume rivers. Scouting is advisable for inexperienced parties.

Class IV Advanced: Intensely powerful, but predictable rapids requiring precise boat handling in turbulent water. Depending on the river's character, it may feature large, unavoidable waves and holes or constricted passages demanding fast maneuvers under pressure. Rapids may require "must" moves above dangerous hazards and scouting is necessary the first time down.

Class V Expert: Extremely long, obstructed, or very violent rapids that expose a paddler to above average endangerment. Drops may contain large, unavoidable waves and holes or steep, congested chutes with complex demanding routes. Rapids may continue for long distances between pools, demanding a high level of fitness. Scouting is mandatory, but often difficult. A very reliable Eskimo roll, proper equipment, extensive experience, and practiced rescue skills are essential for survival.

Class VI Extreme: One grade more difficult than Class V; these runs often exemplify the extremes of difficulty, unpredictability and danger. The consequences of errors are very severe and rescue may be impossible. These runs should be attempted by experts only and at favorable water levels after close personal inspection and taking all precautions.

Paddling Safety Tips

Ten tips to increase your safety while paddling.

1. Wear your life jacket. Some 80 percent of all recreational boating fatalities happen to people who are not wearing a

2. **Know the conditions** including the difficulty of the river, skill level of participants, weather conditions, and stream conditions. If the water looks too hazardous to swim, don't paddle and never boat alone. Boating safety increases with numbers. Get a forecast before you go. Sudden cold, winds, and rain can turn a pleasant trip into a risky, unpleasant, and sometimes dangerous venture.

- 3. **File a float plan** with a reliable person (who is not participating) indicating when and where you are going and estimated time of return.
- 4. **Expect to get wet.** Even the best paddlers swamp their boat or capsize. Bring extra clothes in a waterproof bag.
- 5. **Wear appropriate attire.** Dress for the weather and wear wading shoes or tennis shoes, something that has support. Wool, polypropylene, pile, and neoprene retain heat better when wet. Avoid cotton.
- 6. **Secure the ropes.** Keep all ropes, including the painter lines (ropes tied to the bow) coiled and secured and never tie a rope to yourself or another paddler, especially children.
- 7. **Avoid hazards**. Kneel to increase your stability before entering rough water. However, if you collide with an obstruction, lean toward it. This will usually prevent you from capsizing or flooding the boat.
- 8. **If you capsize**, hold onto your boat, unless it presents a life-threatening situation. If floating with the current, position yourself on the upstream side of the capsized boat.

9. Never take your boat over a low-head dam.

10. **Portage** (carry) your boat around any section of water about which you feel uncertain.





Stewardship

Help care for the land, water, and cultural resources within the Casselman River watershed by respecting wildlife, nature, landowners, and other recreationists. It is important to wash footwear, boats, and vehicles to minimize the spread of invasive species from one place to another. "Leave No Trace," a national outdoor ethics program, provides some guidelines to minimize your impact. For more information, visit www.Lnt.org.

Leave No Trace for camping and day use:

- 1. Plan and prepare
- 2. Travel and camp on durable surfaces
- 3. Dispose of waste properly
- 4. Leave what you find
- 5. Minimize campfires
- 6. Respect wildlife
- 7. Be considerate of other visitors



STOP AQUATIC HITCHHIKERS!"

Prevent the transport of nuisance species. Clean <u>all</u> recreational equipment.



Respect the Privacy and Rights of Landowners

Although the access points highlighted on the map of this guide are open for public use, most of the shoreline along streams and rivers is privately owned. Please respect the privacy and rights of landowners within the watershed by keeping off their property and obtaining permission before entering any privately owned land. Unless you are otherwise certain, assume the land is private property. In any case, avoid loud noises and boisterous behavior. Remember: sound carries across water more clearly than on land. Many landowners enjoy the river's peace and solitude. Use the same courtesy you would want. A friendly wave or quiet greeting is always welcome.

Casselman River Along the Way

The following descriptions are based on the *Canoeing Guide to Western Pennsylvania and Northern Virginia*, developed as a community effort by the canoeists of the American Youth Hostels and other friends. Boating skills that match the river classification for each segment listed are required!

CASSELMAN RIVER BRIDGE STATE PARK: Located near Grantsville, Maryland, this 0.4 acre park features the Casselman River Bridge that was erected in 1813 and spans 80 feet over the Casselman River. The bridge is identified as a national historic landmark and links the park to the Spruce Forest Artisan Village, Penn Alps Restaurant—also a national historic landmark built in 1818, and Stanton's Mill—a working gristmill established in 1797.

Amenities at the site include ample parking for more than 25 vehicles, food, lodging, restrooms, scenic vistas, picnic facilities (including picnic tables and grills), and fishing. The Casselman River is a special regulation delayed harvest fishing area from the bridge to Pennsylvania-Maryland state line and requires a non-tidal Maryland fishing license and trout stamp for anglers over 16 years of age.

<u>Casselman Bridge Access</u>: Located on the State Park side of the Casselman River Bridge, the park provides access to the river by carrying vessels approximately 200 yards through park from the parking facility to the river. The site is not an officially recognized access site; therefore, there is no signage at the site, private property should be respected, and permission should be obtained.

GRANTSVILLE, MD TO SALISBURY, PA: This segment is approximately seven miles of easy paddling with sometimes long Class I riffles running through a beautiful hemlock forest. Challenges in this section include the first riffle section, remains of an old mill dam at Interstate 68 and a low dam one mile below the interstate that should be portaged at high water. The section is normally floatable from early March through mid April.

<u>Salisbury Access</u>: Located behind Elk Lick Township Municipal Building west of Salisbury is a primitive access site. The site is not an officially recognized access site; therefore, there is no signage at the site, private property should be respected, and permission should be obtained.

Amenities at the site include streamside drop-off within five feet from the river and limited parking may be available at the township office with proper permission. Nearby amenities include historical sites, food, shopping, automated teller machine, library, and gas stations in the town of Salisbury.

SALISBURY TO MEYERSDALE: This segment is 9.5 miles of mostly open flat fast flowing water with a few Class I whitewater riffles, more suitable to open boats and requiring less skill than the segment above. This section is normally floatable from December through May.

Jeffrey's Landing: Located at the park behind the Meyersdale Area School District is the river access site. The site is named in memorial to Dale Jeffrey, a charter member of the Casselman River Watershed Association and outdoor en-

Amenities at the site include a picnic pavilion with 12 picnic tables and a grill and limited parking for 1–5 vehicles. However, it is located near the school, where additional parking opportunities are available during non-school hours. Nearby amenities include historical sites, food, lodging, and community parks.

MEYERSDALE TO GARRETT: Like the Salisbury to Meyersdale run, this 5.5 mile segment is mostly fast flowing, open flat water with a few Class I riffles and few boulders, more suitable to open boats. This section of the Casselman becomes polluted by acid mine drainage from the Shaw Mine Complex. As paddlers are approaching Garrett, there will be a windmill on the left side of the river. Because the river becomes larger with the addition of several tributaries, this section can be paddled from December through May. For optimal paddling, the Markleton gauge should read between 2.2 and 3.6 feet.

<u>Brant's Landing:</u> Located off Waterworks Road in Garrett, PA, this site is named in memory of David Brant, a former member of the Casselman River Watershed Association. The road to the access site can be rough, especially during spring, requiring the use of a four-wheel drive vehicle. The river is approximately 200 yards from the parking area down a dirt and gravel pathway.

Amenities at the site include a shared parking lot with the Great Allegheny Passage that provides limited parking with 5—10 official spots. Nearby amenities include food, shopping, community park, automated teller machine, and gas stations in the town of Garrett.

GARRETT TO ROCKWOOD: : This 7.5 mile segment picks up in intensity as more boulders become apparent in the channel and the river becomes a Class I- II run, requiring more maneuvering around larger more powerful obstacles. Gradient picks up as well, with nearly continuous Class I and II in the first part of the segment. This is not a segment for the novice without whitewater experience. This section can be paddled from December through May. The Markleton gauge should read around 2.5 to 3.5 feet.

<u>Roberts Landing</u>: The access site is named in memorial for the Casselman River Watershed Association's founder George Roberts. The access is primitive along the road, but the boat drop-off area has been expanded to accommodate passing traffic. The access is less than 50 yards to the river from River Street. Ample parking is available at the Great Allegheny Passage trailhead.

Amenities at the site include a changing shelter.

thusiast who enjoyed fishing and boating.

Nearby amenities include historical sites, food, camping, lodging, shopping, automated teller machine, and gas stations located within the town of Rockwood.

ROCKWOOD TO MARKELTON: This segment is seven miles of Class II—III intermediate whitewater and the easiest of the intermediate sections. The character of the river begins changing with boulders forming eddies. After passing the town of Casselman, the pace picks up and rapids become steeper and more continuous. Typically, this section is floatable from early December through early June, and is rarely too high. The Markleton river gauge should read between 2.1 to 3.5 feet for optimal conditions. Be sure to respect private property owner rights along the river, especially in this section.

<u>Markelton Access</u>: Located where Iser Run enters the Casselman River off Markelton School Road in Markleton is a Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission launch site. This site doubles as a trailhead for the Great Allegheny Passage.

Amenities at the site include changing stockade, restroom, picnic facilities, and benches. There are no facilities within the nearby village of Markleton.

MARKELTON TO FORT HILL: This six mile segment is the most difficult section of the Casselman River to paddle. It is a class III waterway, with rapids ranging in length from 50 yards to $^{1}/_{3}$ mile with continuous maneuvering at low to moderate water levels. This section is typically floatable from early December through early June; however, for optimal conditions, the Markelton gauge should read between 2 to 3.5 feet.

Hazards in this section include:

The second rapid after Markelton can cause some difficulties as the river squeezes right and then bends to the left. On the right side, there is a nasty rock with an accompanying hole that can be avoided by staying to the far left.

Around the midway point there is a complex drop that could be tricky near the midway point of this section. The river appears to be dammed by boulders. There are three potential paths. If in doubt, stay to the left side; there will still be a double drop, but it will be easier. During high flow conditions, there is a sneak route on the far right. The most challenging and entertaining route is through the center; however, this requires a sharp right-hand turn.

The railroad rapid is a long turn to the left, there is a sneak route on the inside of the curve on the left. As you approach the second railroad bridge, avoid the extreme left. During high water there are some keeper-sized hydraulics and in low water conditions it is a sharp, dry drop.

Near the end of this section there is a large boulder garden that is unavoidable.

<u>Fort Hill Canoe Access</u>: Located off Fort Hill Road, the launch is approximately 50 yards from the parking area down a hard-packed gravel trail. There is ample parking at the site for 20+ vehicles, and a changing house was installed by the Casselman River Watershed Association for boater convenience.

Amenities at the site include standard parking and a changing shelter. There are no amenities nearby in the village of Fort Hill.

FORT HILL TO HARNEDSVILLE: This 5.7 mile segment of Class II and III rapids is mostly fast, flowing water with some ledges and fairly open rapids. The only difficult section is located midway, as the river sharply turns to the right and a waterfall enters on the left; there is a large boulder that divides the river. The path to the right is wavy but easily maneuvered, while the left side is a more challenging paddle. This section is typically floatable from early December through early June and should not be attempted when the water is too high. The Markelton gauge should read between 2–4 feet.

Harnedsville Potential Access: There has been interest expressed to develop a river access site at the Great Allegheny Passage bridge pending landowner coordination and permission. No official access exists.

Nearby amenities include parking and restrooms at the Harnedsville trailhead on the Great Allegheny Passage trail.







HARNEDSVILLE TO CONFLUENCE: For the most part, this four mile segment provides a scenic view, although in the lower section there is a levee for flood control. Other than an easy ledge a short distance below Harnedsville, this section is an easy paddle with fast flowing Class I water. This section is typically floatable from early December through early June. Optimal conditions are when the Markelton gauge is between two and four feet.

<u>Middle Youqhioqheny Ramcat Access:</u> Located near Confluence, PA downstream from the convergence of the Casselman and Youghiogheny rivers, the access site is on the Yough and part of Ohiopyle State Park and is also a trailhead for the Great Allegheny Passage. Do not miss the take-out on the left, ramcat rapid is immediately below.

Amenities at the site include restrooms, telephone for emergencies use and with calling cards, ample parking, and a loading and unloading zone. Other recreational activities at the site including hiking, bicycling, fishing, and horse-

Nearby amenities include food, lodging, gasoline, automated teller machine, community parks, and historical sites in town of Confluence approximately two miles from the take-out location.

Laurel Hill Creek Along the Way

LAUREL HILL STATE PARK

back riding.

Laurel Hill State Park offers camping, cabins, cottages and a lodge. It also offers trails for hiking, picnicking, swimming, boating, fishing and hunting. It provides educational programming, as well as a gift shop. Winter activities at the park include snowshoeing, sledding, snowmobiling, and ice-fishing.

<u>Picnic Area 1 Access</u>: Located on Laurel Hill State Park property below the bridge where State Route 3029 (Copper Kettle Highway) crosses Laurel Hill Creek, paddlers can put in at the picnic area near the lower entrance to the state park. This is an undeveloped access point but could become upgraded in the future.

Nearby amenities include food, lodging, camping, gasoline, automated teller machine, golfing, hiking, and historical sites in Rockwood, Trent, and Somerset.

LAUREL HILL STATE PARK TO KINGS BRIDGE: This 6.5 mile segment of class III rapids contains beautiful scenery, especially as you travel through the state forest. Looks could be deceiving, as the section starts and ends relatively easy. However, the center section contains large ledges, including a four-foot waterfall that approaches rapidly without warning and two tight rapid sections that, during high flows, could be tricky. For optimal conditions, the Ursina gauge should read above 2.1 feet.

<u>Barronvale Bridge Access</u>: Is a primitive take-out. There are no facilities at the access point, including parking. Please respect private property and gain use permission. One mile below the bridge is a developed access at Kings

Nearby amenities include food, lodging, camping, gasoline, automated teller machine, golfing, hiking, and historical sites in Rockwood, Trent, and Confluence

<u>Kings Covered Bridge</u>: This is a developed access site along State Route 653 with good parking and a picnic pavilion. Access to the creek below the bridge is good.

KINGS COVERED BRIDGE TO HUMBERT TAKE-OUT: This ten mile segment of class III rapids is a good section for intermediate whitewater canoeists. One and one half miles below Kings Bridge is Whipkey Dam. The dam must be portaged! Exit off the right river bank just upstream of the retaining wall, the left bank is privately owned. If you use the embedded stairway, be sure to avoid the overflow spillway. After a gentle start, the middle section contains four long challenging rapids with large rock outcroppings and islands. The lower section braids into several channels winding around several small islands that are sometimes blocked with downed trees. The easiest route is through the main channel. This section is usually floatable from early March through mid April. Optimal conditions are when the Ursina gauge is reading between 1.9 and 3.1 feet. Paddling through this section, you will go through Laurel

<u>Game Lands 111 Footbridge Access</u>: Located approximately two miles upstream of the Lower Humbert Covered Bridge, the access is located off Humbert Road (State Route 3007) on a nondescript gravel road leading to a small parking lot near a footbridge within the Delayed Harvest, Artificial Lures Only section of Laurel Hill Creek.

<u>Ramcat Run Youghiogheny River:</u> An alternative take out at Ramcat Run on the Youghiogheny River 1.5 miles downstream of Confluence, which adds approximately seven miles to the run.

Fishing, Camping, Hunting, ATV's

Ridge State Park and cross under the Lower Humbert Covered Bridge.

FISHING

Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission rules and regulations apply to public waters. A summary of fishing and boating rules and regulations can be viewed online at http://fishinpa.com/. There are many streams within the Casselman River watershed that are open to fishing. Please remember to respect private property rights and ask permission before entering private lands.

CAMPING

Camping is permitted only in designated areas in state parks, state forests, and at private campgrounds. Camping is not permitted on State Game Lands. Rangers patrol areas not open to camping, so be aware of your location. Camping on state forest lands is strictly regulated by the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Bureau of Forestry. Camping defined as overnight lodging using standard camping equipment, and is categorized into three different types: primitive camping, motorized camping, and group camping. If you are interested in camping on State Forest lands, contact the State Forest district office to determine where to camp or if designated campsites are available. The district office will issue a camping permit, if needed. Information about camping on State Forests land and required permits may be obtained on the Bureau of Forestry website at http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/forestry/recreation/index.htm

Be aware that hunting occurs on public and private lands throughout the Casselman River watershed primarily from

September through February and late April through May. Visit the PA Game Commission website for more information: www.pgc.state.pa.us.

ALL TERRAIN VEHICLES

All-Terrain Vehicles (ATV's) are only permitted on designated trails. There are no designated public ATV trails within

Emergency Information

the Casselman River Watershed.

EMERGENCY: 911 Cell service may be unreliable in rural and remote parts of the watershed. Identify the nearest medical center as part of your pre-planning activities.

NEARBY HOSPITALS

Somerset Hospital: 225 South Center Street, Somerset, PA 814-443-5000 Meyersdale Medical Center: 200 Hospital Drive, Meyersdale, PA 814-634-5911

Acknowledgements

The Casselman River Watershed Boating and Recreation Guide was developed as a cooperative effort between Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, the Casselman River Watershed Association, Somerset Conservation District, Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Pennsylvania Environmental Council, Laurel Highlands Visitors Bureau, Somerset County Planning Department, Southern Allegheny RC&D, and many interested citizens.

Every effort was made to assure the information contained in this guide is correct. However, we recognize that conditions change over time and that some information may not be accurate.

