



Guidelines for Public Use of WPC Preserves

Last revised 04/18/2024

Western Pennsylvania Conservancy (WPC) preserves are open to the public free-of-charge for low-impact outdoor recreation and enjoyment. In general, common sense is the best guide to the use of WPC preserves. Consideration for resident plants, animals, and human visitors should always be practiced. Recreational activities, such as hiking, hunting, fishing, etc., are done at the participant's own risk. Most preserves are found in a natural state and is unimproved land. In using WPC preserves and in receiving any permit for specific activities, if applicable, the participant acknowledges that they agree to use the preserve at their own risk and agree to hold WPC harmless from any liability or damages arising out of their use.

Please note: Properties on which WPC holds conservation easements or deed restrictions are privately owned, and most are not open to public use. However, certain WPC-held conservation easements allow public access for non-motorized activities such as fishing or hunting. Such activities may be subject to guidelines of the private owner rather than the WPC guidelines below. Contact WPC with any questions.

Because most WPC preserves are open to hunting except on Sundays, all visitors should wear blaze orange during hunting season.

WPC Staff and Volunteer Land Stewards currently monitor and manage almost 14,700 acres of land owned as WPC preserves. For information on how to become a volunteer, please contact the WPC Land Stewardship Program at 412-586-2318 or azadnik@paconserve.org.

The following guidelines are subject to change. Guidelines for specific preserves will be posted on-site and/or indicated on the WPC website, www.waterlandlife.org. For questions not addressed below, please contact WPC at 412-288-2777; 412-586-2318; or azadnik@paconserve.org. For questions specifically related to Bear Run Nature Reserve, please call 724-238-2492.

BICYCLES: Bicycles, including Class 1 E-bikes, are permitted only in designated areas. E.g., at the Dr. Colson E. Blakeslee Memorial Recreation Area, bicycles are permitted only along the abandoned railroad corridor. At Bennett Branch Forest, bicycles are permitted only on trails designated for such use. Bicycles also are permitted on designated multi-use trails (e.g., the Great Allegheny Passage) that bisect WPC preserves. Also see **VEHICLES**.

CAMPING is permitted at designated preserves only. E.g., backcountry camping at Bear Run Nature Reserve is permitted only at designated sites that must be reserved ahead of time. Backcountry camping is permitted at Bennett Branch Forest and Dutch Hill Forest, though fires are not allowed except for backpacking stoves. All camping activities should follow Leave No Trace principles.

CAMPFIRES are currently permitted only in designated campsites at Bear Run Nature Reserve. Only dead and downed tree limbs may be used for firewood. No vegetation is to be removed from the

preserve and no firewood may be brought in from off-site. All campfires must be closely monitored and completely extinguished before leaving the campsite. During periods of drought, WPC staff may post “No Campfires Permitted” signs. Any “fire danger” period or other warning issued by the PA DCNR-Bureau of Forestry must be adhered to.

DOGS are permitted unless otherwise posted. All dogs must be leashed or under control at all times. All dog waste should be removed from the preserve and properly disposed of.

DRONES (unmanned aircraft guided by remote control or onboard computers) are permitted only with the express written permission of WPC. At Fallingwater and Bear Run Nature Reserve, drones are only permitted with the express written permission of WPC’s President and CEO or the Director of Fallingwater.

DUMPING any material, including household waste, landscaping materials and municipal waste, is strictly prohibited.

FISHING is permitted in accordance with PA Fish and Boat Commission regulations. To minimize the risk of spreading invasive species, all boats and equipment must be thoroughly washed (ideally with a pressure hose), dried, and kept on land for at least 48 hours prior to entering any new body of water.

At Bear Run Nature Reserve, fishing is not permitted in the Bear Run stream from the SR 381 bridge downstream to the Youghiogheny River.

GEOCACHING is permitted. Before placing a cache on a WPC preserve, individuals must first obtain approval from WPC’s Land Stewardship Program (contact azadnik@paconserve.org).

HIKING, snow-shoeing, and cross-country skiing are encouraged on all WPC preserves. Visitors are asked to remain on designated trails when possible and to wear fluorescent orange during hunting season. Leave No Trace principles should be followed.

HORSES are limited to designated areas only. At Bear Run Nature Reserve, adjoining landowners may ride horses on designated trails, but must first acquire a free permit by calling the Land Stewardship program at 724-329-7803. At the Dr. Colson E. Blakeslee Memorial Recreation Area, horseback riding is permitted along the abandoned railroad corridor. Riders should wear fluorescent orange during hunting season.

HUNTING is allowed in accordance with Pennsylvania Game Laws unless otherwise indicated. Trapping is not allowed at any WPC preserve. Selected preserves may be enrolled in the PA Game Commission’s Deer Management Assistance Program (DMAP). For information on game laws, seasons, bag limits and DMAP, contact the PA Game Commission or visit www.pgc.state.pa.us.

The following specific hunting restrictions apply:

- Hunting for any species is prohibited on Sundays.
- PA Game Law safety zone rules apply around all occupied structures. Additional “No-hunting” zones may be posted at specific preserves.
- All firearms, bows and other weapons are prohibited in a designated area around Fallingwater.

- Hunters at Bear Run Nature Reserve must first download a free permit from the WPC website: <https://waterlandlife.org/land-conservation/explore-our-properties/bear-run-nature-reserve/>.
- All hunting at Beechwood Farms Nature Reserve is managed by the Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania (call 412-963-6100 for more information).
- Permanent tree stands or hunting blinds, or screw-in steps, are not permitted. All stands and blinds must be removed at the end of deer season. Any that remain may be removed by and become the property of WPC.

NON-MOTORIZED BOATS, such as canoes and kayaks, are permitted. Users should take appropriate precautions to minimize disturbance to wildlife and natural communities. To minimize the risk of spreading invasive species, all boats and equipment must be thoroughly washed (ideally with a pressure hose), dried and kept on land for at least 48 hours prior to entering any new body of water.

Motorized boats (including those with electric motors) are not permitted on Lake Pleasant.

PESTICIDE/HERBICIDE USE is prohibited without prior approval.

REMOVAL OF PLANTS, ANIMALS AND OTHER OBJECTS, including fossils, is prohibited except as indicated below. This includes the picking and collection of plants, fungi, animals not otherwise covered under PA Game and Fish laws, invertebrates, and inorganic materials such as rocks and minerals. Picking a handful of fruit, other plants, or mushrooms for personal, non-commercial, use is permitted.

The introduction of exotic plants and animals is strictly prohibited. The introduction of native plants and animals is by permission only.

The scientific collection of plants, animals, prehistoric artifacts, and other materials is by written permission only. Specimens must be deposited in a public depository, such as a museum or academic institution. For permission, contact the WPC Land Stewardship Program.

RESEARCH focused on ecology and species is encouraged. Any party interested in conducting appropriate research should submit a proposal to the WPC Land Stewardship Program (contact azadnik@paconserve.org).

ROCK CLIMBING. There are currently no WPC preserves with designated climbing areas.

SCUBA (SKIN) DIVING is permitted at Lake Pleasant. Groups must first obtain a special activity permit from the PA Fish and Boat Commission's northwest regional office. Individuals are not permitted to remove plants, animals, or other objects from the lake (see **REMOVAL OF PLANTS, ANIMALS, AND OTHER OBJECTS**). To minimize the potential risk of spreading invasive species, all equipment must be thoroughly washed (ideally with a pressure hose), dried, and kept on land for at least 48 hours prior to entering Lake Pleasant or any new body of water.

TARGET SHOOTING AND PAINTBALL are not permitted. This includes but is not limited to target shooting with rifles, shotguns, pellet guns, air guns and archery equipment.

Please note: All firearms and other weapons are prohibited in a designated area around Fallingwater.

TRAPPING is prohibited on WPC preserves (see **HUNTING**).

VEHICLES are not permitted except in designated areas. Vehicles include all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), dirt bikes, bicycles (see **BICYCLES** for more information), quads, trikes, amphibious craft, snowmobiles, cars and trucks. **Motorized boats are not permitted on Lake Pleasant.**

Visitors with questions about access for individuals with mobility disabilities should refer to WPC's "Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Accessibility Guidelines for Western Pennsylvania Conservancy Lands and Trails" (available at www.waterlandlife.org), or contact WPC at 412-288-2777; 412-586-2318; or azadnik@paconserve.org.

Western Pennsylvania Conservancy preserves are managed to provide our region with clean waters and healthy forests, wildlife and natural areas for the benefit of present and future generations. For more information, please visit our website, www.waterlandlife.org, or contact the WPC Land Stewardship program at 412-586-2318 or azadnik@paconserve.org.