



Guidelines for Public Use of WPC-owned Properties

Last revised 01/27/2017

Properties owned by Western Pennsylvania Conservancy (WPC) are open to the public free-of-charge. Western Pennsylvania Conservancy promotes the use of its properties for low-impact outdoor recreation and enjoyment. In general, common sense is the best guide to the use of WPC lands. 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 WPC property is found in its natural state and is unimproved land. In using WPC property and in receiving any permit for specific activities, if applicable, the participant acknowledges that they agree to use WPC property at their own risk and agree to hold WPC harmless from any liability or damages arising out of their use.

Please note: Most properties on which WPC holds conservation easements or deed restrictions are privately owned and not open to the public. Contact WPC with any questions.

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

Staff and Volunteer Land Stewards currently monitor and manage more than 13,700 acres of land held by WPC. 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 properties will be posted at the property 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 724-329-7803 or email bjones@paconserve.org.

BICYCLES: Bicycles are permitted only in designated areas. For instance, 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 on maintained logging roads. Bicycles also are permitted on designated multi-use trails (e.g., the Great Allegheny Passage) that bisect WPC properties. Also see **VEHICLES**.

CAMPING is permitted at designated properties only. Backcountry camping at Bear Run Nature Reserve is permitted only at designated sites, and campers must register at the trailhead kiosk. Backcountry camping is permitted at Bennett Branch Forest, though campfires are not allowed. The best guideline to follow while camping is to leave with everything you brought and leave a minimal trace of your visit.

Primitive camping can be a valuable means of experiencing natural lands. However, not all lands are suitable, safe, or comfortable for camping, and we periodically evaluate the potential for this activity on all properties.

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

Due to fire safety concerns, all campfires must be closely monitored and completely extinguished before leaving the campsite. To minimize the spread of invasive species, firewood must not be moved between properties.

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 property and properly disposed of.

Dogs are often family members and deserve the benefits of open land as do humans. In an effort to not infringe upon the activities of other visitors or harm wildlife, dogs must be leashed or under control. Excessive dog waste can adversely impact human health and the health of native plants and animals.

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

Dumping of materials creates a health and human safety liability on WPC and other lands, as well as threatens natural communities.

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 WPC property or 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 where it enters the culvert passing under the railroad line adjacent to the Youghiogheny River.

Fishing is a recreational activity that can help visitors experience natural lands. The exception for the lower reach of Bear Run is due to potential conflicts with Fallingwater visitors.

GEOCACHING is permitted. Before placing a cache on WPC property, individuals must first obtain approval from WPC’s Land Stewardship Program.

Utilizing GPS technology can provide a unique opportunity to enjoy, understand, appreciate, and learn to be good stewards of natural lands.

HIKING, snow-shoeing, and cross-country skiing are encouraged on all WPC property. Visitors are asked to remain on designated trails when possible and to wear fluorescent orange during hunting season.

Hiking on natural lands is one of the best ways to enjoy, understand, appreciate, and learn to be good stewards of the natural wealth of western Pennsylvania.

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

Horseback riding can help individuals experience natural lands. However, horseback riding also can damage unhardened trails and spread invasive plants. Therefore, riding is limited to designated trails on selected properties only.

HUNTING is allowed in accordance with Pennsylvania Game Laws unless otherwise indicated. Trapping is not allowed at any WPC properties. Selected WPC properties 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 properties.
- All firearms, bows and other weapons are prohibited in a designated area around Fallingwater.
- All hunting at Beechwood Farms Nature Reserve is managed by the Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania (412-963-6100).
- Permanent tree stands or hunting blinds are not permitted on WPC property. Screw-in steps are not permitted. All temporary stands and blinds must be removed at the end of deer season. Any that are remaining may be removed by and become the property of WPC.

Present deer populations in Pennsylvania are excessive and resulting in ecological damage to forests. In the absence of enough natural predators, we believe that an effective means to control the deer population is to allow hunting. Trapping is prohibited in part due to the potential to harm non-target animals, including domestic dogs.

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 WPC property or 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.

Pesticide use may be necessary for the control of exotic invasive species or for the management of unique natural communities

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 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.

The removal of native plants, animals and materials can damage natural communities and infringe upon the enjoyment of other visitors. WPC lands are primarily intended to retain as much of their natural qualities as possible.

There are times when scientific collecting is a valuable tool to further understand land and its ecological functions. We will grant written permission for collections that further our understanding of the land and that will be properly cared for and made available to the scientific community. Redundant collections may be prohibited.

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.

We encourage appropriate research to further our knowledge of species and natural processes.

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

Due to threats to rock-face moss communities, dry moss/lichen/fern communities at the tops of the rock faces, and moist cliff base communities, climbing is currently not permitted at any WPC properties.

SCUBA (SKIN) DIVING is permitted at Lake Pleasant. Groups must first obtain a special activities 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.

Target shooting and the game of paintball may result in safety risks, disturbance to other visitors and wildlife, and damage to the natural environment. In addition, the excessive use of lead shot may result in soil and water contamination.

TRAPPING is prohibited on WPC properties (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) 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.

Vehicles are inappropriate on conservation lands due to the physical damage, conflicts with passive recreation, potential for the spread of invasive species, and noise and pollution that result.

Western Pennsylvania Conservancy properties 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.