

Welcome to the Ontelaunee Wetlands Preserve!

We hope you enjoy your visit to this historic property, now the site of active, on-going restoration by Berks Nature. The 31-acre preserve is bordered by the Schuylkill River to the west and features a relaxing, half-mile trail that loops through a recently restored riparian forest. Explore and enjoy watching this newly planted forest take root!

Moving Forward from a History of Harm

This land was once part of the Schuylkill Navigation system – often known as the Schuylkill Canal – a complex series of slackwater pools, dams, and canals which made the Schuylkill River navigable for trade.

In its heyday in the mid-1800s, the Navigation could deliver as much as 2 million tons of coal downstream in a single year, which powered the nation through its Industrial Revolution and two world wars.

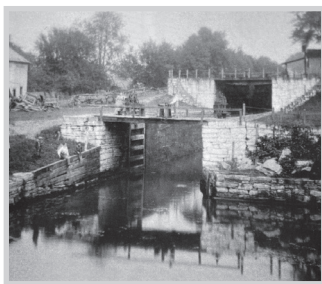


Photo credit: Schuylkill Navigation system Locks #34-35 – Hamburg Area Historical Society

By 1927 the U.S. Army Corps estimated that the Schuylkill River was choking on 38 million tons of coal waste.

In 1945, the Schuylkill River Desilting Project took on the daunting task of dredging the Schuylkill River to remove the coal's poison and restore the river, an effort that continues today.

The Ontelaunee Wetlands Preserve is one such example of this on-going redemption. Buried beneath our feet we stand upon a section of this once bustling canal system between Locks 34-35 at Mohrsville and Locks 36-37 at Leesport Lock House.

Now filled, trees have taken root over top the former canal. Native wildflowers have also returned, supporting local pollinators and improving the ecological resiliency of the watershed.

New public access in the way of a walking trail and small boat launch for non-motorized watercraft have also been added, creating new opportunities for the people of this watershed to reconnect with the Schuylkill River not as a resource to be exploited, but as a community asset to be protected.



At Berks Nature we believe that nature is essential to our quality of life. We are your local non-profit conservation organization, and invite you to become involved by visiting berksnature.org and:

- Becoming a Champion of Nature!
- Attending a fun event listed at berksnature.org!
- Making a donation to help us protect nature.
- Signing up for our E-news updates!
- Sending the children in your lives to summer Eco-Camp or our Berks Nature Preschool



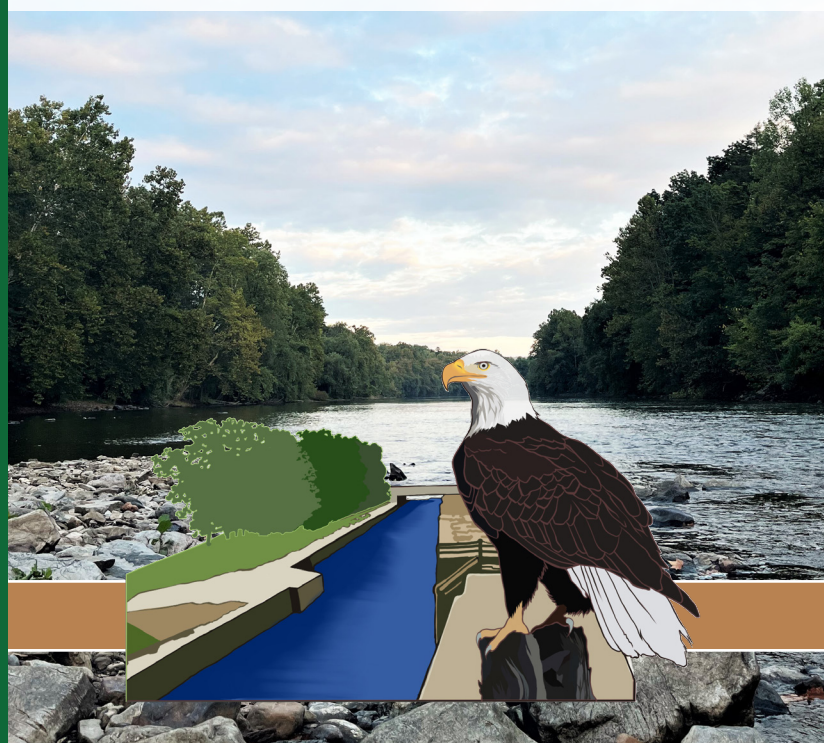
Learn more at BerksNature.org!



Nature, essential to our quality of life

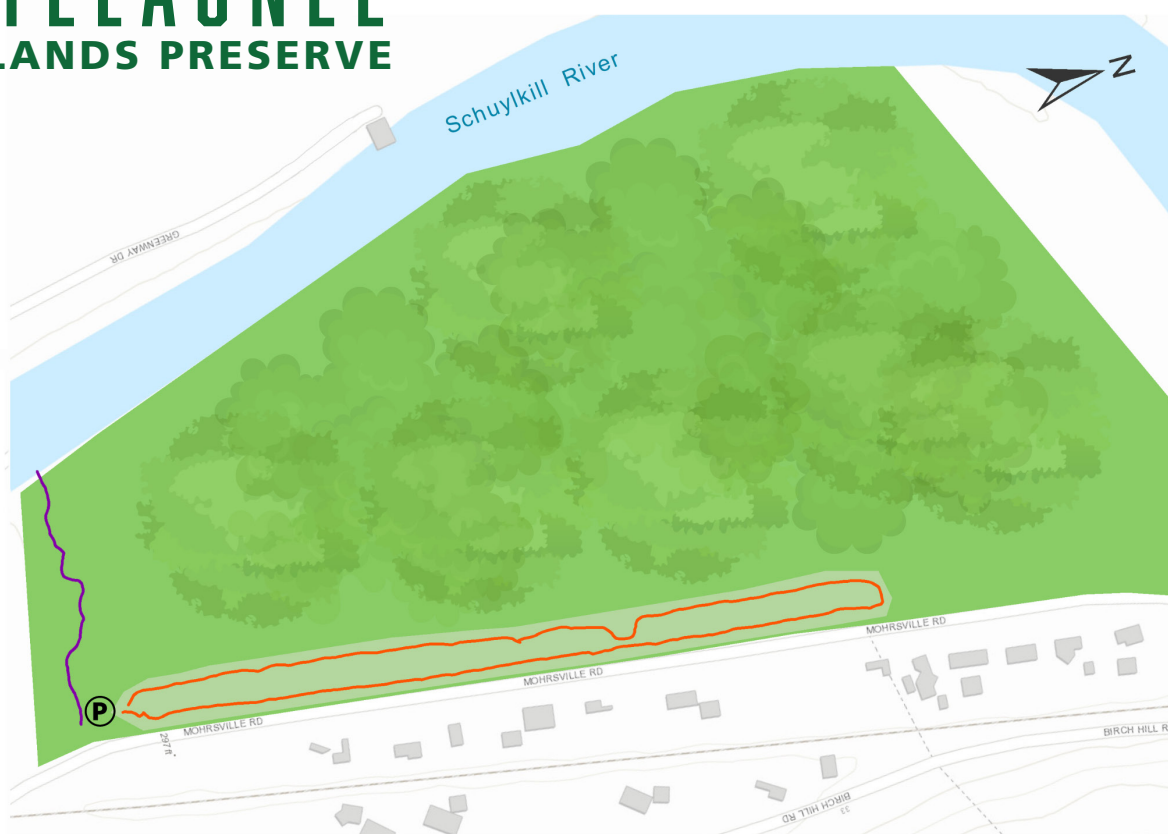
**ONTELAUNEE
WETLANDS PRESERVE**

TRAIL GUIDE



Legend

- Canal Loop Trail
- River Access Trail
- Preserve Area
- Ecological Restoration Area
- P Parking



Preserve Rules and Trail Safety

- Open dawn until dusk
- No restroom facilities, drinking water, or telephones currently exist on the preserve
- Visitation at your own risk – you are responsible for your actions and safety on this property
- Practice **Leave no Trace principles** while recreating – pack out trash and leave this space better than when you found it
- Stay on the trails to avoid disturbing wild plants and animals
- All pets **MUST** be leashed at all times. Please pick up and dispose of dog waste properly
- **For the safety of trail users, all motorized vehicles are prohibited**
- **NO** alcohol
- **NO** fires
- **NO** littering
- Overnight camping is not allowed
- Hunting and removal of any plants or animals without Berks Nature's consent is prohibited. Violators will be prosecuted

The Ontelaunee Wetlands Preserve came to Berks Nature in 1977 as a land donation by the Wyomissing Foundation. In 2022, a grant awarded by the Schuylkill Highlands Conservation Landscape Initiative funded activities to convert the property into a public nature preserve. Thanks to this funding, improvements in the way of new parking infrastructure, native tree plantings, and educational signage have increased the access and community value of this property.



Thank you for your help keeping this preserve
a special place for wildlife and people!

PHOTO CREDIT: MARC SILVER