

“A Paddler’s Guide to the Schuylkill River Water Trail”

I. PROJECT HISTORY

- A. Previous Schuylkill River Water Trail Guide was designed in 19?? and last updated in 2002?
- B. Birdsboro Bridge/PennDOT Issues (November 2012)
- C. Bob requests KCC advisory committee for water trail safety
- D. First meeting of the Keystone Canoe Club’s “Schuylkill River Water Trail Committee”: January 3, 2013
- E. Since beginning to document my time, I alone have contributed well over 3000 volunteer hours ... and counting. Many others have contributed many hours, as well (see “Partners” below).

II. GOALS AND PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDE

- A. River Access information
 - 1. Landings
 - 2. Shuttle Roads
- B. River Navigation & Safety Information
 - 1. Route Guidance
 - 2. Hazard Negotiation/ Avoidance
 - 3. Safety Advice
- C. Foster Appreciation and Enjoyment of the River and its Watershed
 - 1. Recreation (Getting people onto river and land trails. Getting them outdoors, in general)
 - 2. History
 - 3. Culture
 - 4. Tourism
 - 5. Natural Beauty & Resources (Conservation)
- D. Riverside Community Engagement
 - 1. Getting paddlers into communities (To provide services and enlightenment)
 - 2. Getting communities to encourage use and stewardship of the river and its surroundings (for its economic benefit and pride).

III. GUIDE BOOKLET/POCKET

- A. Size: 7” wide x 12.25” high
- B. Material: Highly-durable (virtually-indestructible), waterproof, 58 lb/8ml YUPO Accel Cover, Smooth, White synthetic stock (same as Section Maps)
- C. Binding: Plastic-coated wire spiral coil
- D. Closures: Velcro tabs on inside-front and inside-back covers close booklet and “lock” maps in pocket when not in use.
- E. Content: 20 pages plus fold-out front cover and back cover with inside map pocket.
 - 1. FRONT COVER: Photo montage of scenes of the Schuylkill, roughly follows the full length of the Water Trail from top left (Schuylkill Haven) to bottom right (Philadelphia).
 - 2. INSIDE-FRONT COVER:
 - a. **“How to Use the Schuylkill River Water Trail Guide”** (a descriptive “table of contents” of sorts and an introduction and explanation of the special and unique features of this Guide). 6.5” x 12.25” flap.

- b. **“Landings: River Access, Amenities & Services”** is a 13.5” x 12.25” fold-out table. There are rows for each of the 38 official water trail landings, from Schuylkill Haven Island Park to Bartram’s Garden, and columns for Landing Number, Landing Name, River Mile, River Bank, Section Map(s), Launch Permit, Boat Launch, Parking (No. of Spaces), Handicap Parking, Minimum Carry Distance, Toilet, Drinking Water, PicnicTable, Pavilion, Information Signs, Information Center, Snacks/Groceries, Restaurants, ATM, Lodging Paddling Gear, Bait & Tackle, and More Services Information. Table Symbols indicate approximate distance of amenities and services from launch.
- c. **Additional Notes:** Launch Permits, Fishing, GPS Coordinates, and Parking Reminders

3. TABBED CHAPTERS

- a. **“Welcome” chapter (2 pages):**

- (1) The “Welcome” page is a brief history of the Schuylkill River and its role in the American Revolution, Industrial Revolution, and Environmental Revolution.
- (2) The “Schuylkill Today” page tells about the river’s current value to and impact on its residents and visitors.

- b. **“Trip Planner” chapter (12 pages):** A section-by-section overview of the Schuylkill River Water Trail, this narrative, sprinkled with relevant images, offers the “personality” of each section and is provided to help a paddler choose and plan trips that fit his/her interests, time, and paddling skills.

- (1) Each section description begins with “trip specs,” the section’s River Miles; Travel Time; Skills Rating; “Minimum” and “Good” Water Levels at relevant USGS gauge(s); and website URLs for those USGS gauges.
- (2) This chapter is intended to be used in conjunction with the detailed Section Maps and related “Smell the Roses” and Waypoints pages (see below).

- c. **“Have a Safe Trip” chapter (4 pages):** This information is provided to help educate paddlers on the hazards and challenges of paddling rivers of this type (and the Schuylkill, in particular). It is also to help them recognize their abilities and limits, prepare them properly for different weather and water conditions, and to encourage them to exercise caution and common sense, thereby reducing the risks and increasing the quality of their paddling experiences on the Schuylkill River Water Trail. The topics addressed are:

- (1) “Be Prepared (Before You Go) ...”
- (2) “Head Protection”
- (3) “Know Your Skills and Limits”
- (4) “Paddling, Alcohol, and Drugs Don’t Mix!”
- (5) “Improve Your Skills” (Paddle Clubs, Professional Instruction, Guided River Trips, and Other Resources)
- (6) “Paddler Skill Ratings” (Beginner, Novice, Intermediate, and Advanced)
- (7) “Common River Hazards” (Rapids, Strainers, Broaching, Bridges, Dams, High Water, Cold Water Shock, and Hypothermia)
- (8) “Ropes & Tethers”
- (9) “Dress for Weather and Water” (Cold Weather Clothing, Rain Gear, Footwear, Sun Protection, Eyeglass Restraints, Whistles, and Night Lights)
- (10) “Hydration”
- (11) “Walking & Wading”

- (12) "If You Capsize ..."
- (13) "Sprayskirts"
- (14) "Dos and Don'ts"
- (15) "Have a Safe Trip!"
- (17) "In an Emergency"
- (18) "Current Conditions"

d. **"Field Guide" chapter (2-1/3 pages):** This chapter celebrates the remarkable revival of the nearly-dead Schuylkill River by providing a small sampling of photos and illustrations of the vast biodiversity (Amphibians, Birds, Fish, Mammals, Invertebrates, Plants, and Reptiles) that a paddler may now experience along the Schuylkill River Water Trail:

- (1) References to other sources of information on the Schuylkill's flora and fauna:
 - (a) Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) www.dcnr.state.pa.us
 - (b) Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC) www.fishandboat.com
 - (c) Pennsylvania Game Commission (PGC) www.pgc.pa.gov
- (2) "River Ethics for Paddlers" guidelines

4. INSIDE-BACK COVER / POCKET:

- (1) **Glued, dimensional pocket** houses the 18 Section Maps (see below). On this pocket are the:
 - (a) **Section Index Map:** Locates the Section Maps relative to the river, river-side cities and towns, and major roads
 - (b) **Map Legend:** National Park Service-style icons and their identification. These icons are used on the Section Maps and throughout the Guide
- (2) Last column of Field Guide photos, to the left of the pocket under maps.

5. BACK COVER:

- (1) **SRHA Mission Statement and Contact Info**
- (2) **Partners:** Long list of Sponsors, Individual Donors, Content Contributors, GIS Data sources, Photography and Illustration, Design, and Printing.

IV. TRI-FOLD SECTION MAPS

- A. Size: 20.125" wide x 12" high (fully-opened); 6.75" wide x 12" high (folded into 3 panels)
- B. Material: Highly-durable (virtually-indestructible), waterproof, 58 lb/8ml YUPO Accel Cover, Smooth, White synthetic stock (same as Guide Booklet)
- C. Binding: Loose. Nine 3-panel sheets, housed in glued, dimensional pocket on inside-back cover of Guide Booklet.
- D. Content: 18 GIS-based map spreads, 2 map spreads per sheet, printed front and back.
 - 1. SECTION MAPS (center panel):
 - a. Feature-rich (identified in Map Legend on pocket on inside-back cover)
 - (1) **Landings:** Black location dot and oval landing number (rounded to nearest whole river mile like highway exit signs)
 - (2) **Canoe Launches:** Unpowered boats only
 - (3) **Boat Ramps:** Powered and unpowered boats. Launch permit usually required.

- (4) **River Left (RL):** Left side of river as you look downstream
- (5) **River Right (RR):** Right side of river as you look downstream
- (6) **River Miles (RM):** Measured upstream in miles along the center of the river, beginning with zero at the river's mouth at the Delaware River
- (7) **Rapids:** Class I rapids are shown as light blue areas on the river. Class I+, II, and II+ are also shown as light blue areas on river, plus classification identification labels (ex: "I+") are added.
- (8) **Route Guidance:** Dark blue arrows show suggested route around islands, through tricky spots, etc.
- (9) **Caution:** All "Caution areas have "action maps" and text descriptions on accompanying Waypoints pages to provide guidance through and/or around these hazards or obstacles.
- (10) **Extra Caution:** All "Extra Caution" Areas have "action maps" and text descriptions on the accompanying Waypoints pages to provide guidance through and/or around these hazards or obstacles.
- (11) **Portage:** Orange dots and black dotted lines show where to take out, the path (and distance) to follow, and where to put back in to carry around obstacles or hazards. Portages are also shown on "action maps" on Waypoints pages.
- (12) **Tributaries:** Named tribs are labeled on maps in blue. Mouth of named tributaries (where they enter the Schuylkill) are shown on Waypoints pages using NPS icon and name (see below).
- (13) **Bridges:** On "action maps" (on Waypoints pages), these bridge decks are sometimes shown as transparent grey to show important river features under the bridge. Only bridges crossing the river and major tribs are shown with this "deck" symbol.
- (14) **Dams:** Intact dam, usually requiring portage
- (15) **Dam Remnants:** Old breached dam that can usually be paddled through or around, but can cause more-difficult passage.
- (16) **"Y" Intersections:** Choice of channels around island
- (17) **Compass Orientation:** Arrow points to North
- (18) **River Flow Direction:** Arrows point to general direction of downriver flow
- (19) **Interstate Highways**
- (20) **US Highways**
- (21) **PA Highways**
- (22) **Secondary Highways/Streets**
- (23) **"Shuttle Roads" (local roads/streets to landings):** Roads and streets shown as black lines are the suggested routes to get from one water trail landing to another on that Section Map. These roads, no matter how small, are labeled with their names on the maps. "Shuttle roads" that are large enough to be numbered are also labeled with names, whenever possible.
- (24) **USGS Stations:** The official United States Geological Survey gauge numbers and GPS coordinates are shown on the Waypoints pages. Gauge website URLs are shown in the "trip specs" at the beginning of each section description in the "Trip Planner"
- (25) **Parks/Public Lands**

- (26) **County Borders**
- (27) **Hospitals/Urgent Care:** Facilities that provide urgent care or higher-level medical services. If the facility is off the map, its icon is shown at the edge of the map with approximate distance (road miles) and direction from the icon to the facility.
- (28) **Schuylkill River Impounding Basin:** These basins were built during the mid-20th century as part of the “Schuylkill River Desilting Project” that removed coal silt from the river (see “Smell the Roses” pages C & K). Many have reverted to natural surroundings.
- (29) **Powerplants:** Both active and inactive
- (30) **Water and/or Wastewater Treatment Facilities**
- (31) **Airports**
- (32) **Multi-Purpose Trails:** Hiking, biking, and usually equestrian activities are allowed on these trails. Green dotted lines indicate actual trail. Green dots indicate trailhead (access and parking).
- (33) **Hiking Trails:** No biking or equestrian activities allowed on these trails. Brown dotted lines and brown dots mark trail and trailheads, respectively.
- (34) **Campground:** The only public campground along the Schuylkill River Water Trail is the Fred J. Doberstein Campsite (see Section I).
- (35) **Points-of-Interest:** Natural, Historical, Architectural, or Cultural
- (36) **SRHA Gateway Center/Information:** Official Schuylkill River Heritage Area Gateway (information) Center or where significant SRHA and/or Water Trail information is available to the public.
- (37) **Parking**
- (38) **Restroom:** Could be flush, porta-potty, or “other.” Amenities boxes will say.
- (39) **Drinking Water**
- (40) **Picnic Area**
- (41) **Picnic Shelter**
- (42) **Food/Grocery:** Store. Carryout.
- (43) **Food Services/Restaurant**
- (44) **Lodging:** Indoor accommodations
- (45) **ATM**
- (46) **Canoe/Kayak Rental**
- b. **“Shaded Relief” base layer:** 3D view of topography
- c. **“Paddler’s Orientation:”** All maps read from bottom to top of page, regardless of the compass direction of the river’s flow. “North” icons show map rotation. “Flow” icons remind viewer of general direction of river’s flow.
- d. **Landing to Landing:** Each map is a complete “day trip” (ranging from 2.2 to 11.1 miles). Maps overlap (Not edge-to-edge match-up from map to map).
- e. **2”=1 mile Scale:** Large enough to see river details
- f. **Landing Amenities & Services Boxes:** Icons show amenities and services within 0.5 mile of landing and text notes direct to nearest amenities and services between 0.5 and 5.0 miles. Also notes alert users to other important landing-related information.
- g. **Latitude & Longitude Grid (.05 degree increments):** Labels are placed along grid lines at edges of map.

- h. **County, municipality, and community names:** In the City of Philadelphia, community names (ex: Manayunk) are displayed in same style as municipalities elsewhere on the Maps.
2. WAYPOINTS PAGES (right panel)
- a. **Section “specs:”** River Miles, Travel Time, Skills Rating, and “Minimum” and “Good” Water Levels at relevant USGS gauges
- b. **Waypoints:** Significant and visible physical landmarks found along the route, from beginning of section to end. Each feature is identified by its location in river miles (to the closest tenth of a mile) and with an NPS-style icon and name. Waypoints include Bridges, Mouths of Tributaries, Landings (both canoe and motorboat launches), POIs, Dams, USGS Gauge Stations, and Cautions.
- (1). **Landings:** Information in these Waypoints entries includes GPS coordinates for both river and road access, landing owner, parking, and, for the more-urbanized landings, visitor bureau website addresses to help find and/or choose nearby services.
- (2) **“Action Maps:”** Enlarged illustrations of “Caution” areas of river. These maps and related text provide guidance through and/or around hazardous or difficult river features.
- e. **Emergency Services:** Identified by “hospital” icon, these text units remind paddlers about calling 911 in an emergency and also rate cellphone service reception for each Section Map.
- f. **Photos, illustrations, captions, and quotes** add to the story of that section of river.
- g. **“Lock 60 Loop:”** Bonus map of river/canal loop from Schuylkill Canal Park to Longford Park and back (Section M)
3. “SMELL THE ROSES” PAGES (left panel)
- a. **Select Points-of-Interest (POIs)** are highlighted with text descriptions, photos, illustrations, and contact information (how to find out more or visit).
- (1). POIs along river are located by River Mile (to tenths of a mile)
- (2) POIs off-river are located by distance (road miles) and compass direction from nearest landing (and where that landing is located on the river [in river miles and riverbank]).
- d. **“Sidebars:”** In beige boxes, these general topics, mostly historical in nature, relate to the Section Map on which they are found, but also to the Schuylkill River corridor in general.

V. PARTNERS

A. Sponsors

- National Park Service
- Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR)
- Keystone Canoe Club

B. Individual Donors

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- Johanna Fallon

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D. GIS Data

- County of Berks
- County of Chester
- County of Montgomery
- County of Philadelphia
- County of Schuylkill
- Delaware River Basin Commission
- PASDA
- U. S. Census Bureau

E. Photography & Illustration

- AHS – Auburn Historical Society
- BK/VP – B. Krist for Visit Philadelphia™
- BM/HM – Bill Moses for Hawk Mountain Sanctuary
- BC – Berks County
- BN – Berks Nature
- BS – Brian Swisher
- CG – Cody Goddard
- CP – Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
- CP/DEP – Commonwealth of Pennsylvania/Department of Environmental Protection
- CRR – Colebrookdale Railroad
- CS – Courtney Smyth
- DC – Dan Creighton
- DCNR – Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources
- EB – Evan Brandt
- FLP – Free Library of Philadelphia, Centennial Exhibition Digital Collection
- FOW – Friends of the Wissahickon
- GAFA – Greshville Antiques and Fine Art
- GGR – Go Greater Reading
- GW/VP – G. Widman for Visit Philadelphia™
- HAHS – Hamburg Area Historical Society
- HSPA – Historical Society of Phoenixville Area
- IS – Ian Shive
- JB – Joe Bove
- JK – Jerry Keefer Photography
- JQ – Jeremy Quant
- JS/VP – J. Smith for Visit Philadelphia™
- JW – Jim Widders
- LC – Laura Catalano
- MAAM – Mid-Atlantic Air Museum
- MC – Montgomery County
- MC3 – Montgomery County Community College
- PGC – Pennsylvania Game Commission

- PM – Penn Museum
- PZ – Philadelphia Zoo
- RK/VP – R. Kennedy for Visit Philadelphia™
- RE – Reading Eagle
- RE/JD – Reading Eagle/Jeremy Drey
- RF – Rita Floriani
- RT – RittenhouseTown
- SFAHS – Spring Ford Area Historical Society
- SHH – Schuylkill Haven History
- SMPP – Smith Memorial Playground & Playhouse
- SN – The Schuylkill Navigation: A Photographic History, by Harry L. Rinker
- SRDC – Schuylkill River Development Corp.
- TD/PFBC – Tom Diez, PA Fish & Boat Commission
- TW/PFBC – Ted Walke, PA Fish & Boat Commission
- WIAC – Walk In Art Center
- WH – Walt Hug

F. Design

- Brian Swisher, The Swisher Studio

G. Printing

- Boyertown Publishing